

**OREMIUS:**  
**OR**  
**THE PLACE OF PRAYER**  
**IN MODERN RELIGIOUS LIFE**

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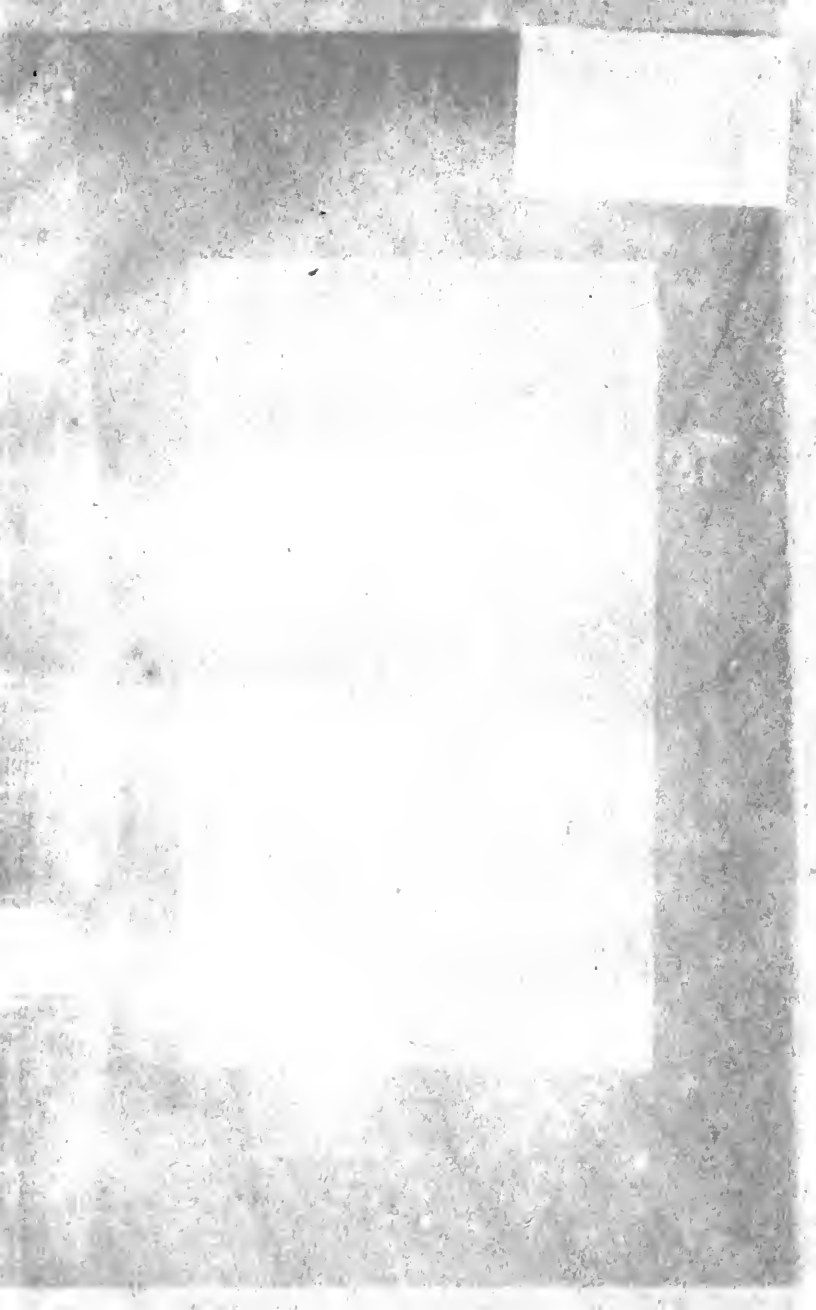


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IN MODERN RELIGIOUS LIFE.





# OREMUS:

OR

## THE PLACE OF PRAYER IN MODERN RELIGIOUS LIFE.

BY THE

REV. J. R. COHU,

RECTOR OF ASTON CLINTON, BUCKS; SOMETIME FELLOW  
OF JESUS COLLEGE, OXFORD.

(*Author of "The Old Testament in the Light of Modern Research";*  
*"The Sermon on the Mount"; "The Morning Service";*  
*"The Ten Commandments."*)

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY THE  
RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF WINCHESTER.

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1908.



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TO THE RIGHT REVEREND  
HERBERT EDWARD RYLE, D.D.,  
LORD BISHOP OF WINCHESTER,  
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK  
IN GRATEFUL RECOGNITION  
OF  
MUCH KINDLY ENCOURAGEMENT.

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## INTRODUCTION.

BY THE RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP  
OF WINCHESTER.

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I WELCOME the appearance of a new and suggestive work upon "Prayer." The subject is one upon which Christian thought needs to be aroused and invigorated. The Church has too often shown itself to be timid, or forgetful, in the matter of prayer. If "we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts," we have also made too little endeavour to realise the privilege of our communion with the Heavenly Father. The very meaning of prayer is often misunderstood ; its practice is often grievously neglected ; its blessings are often lost. The Church has sadly forfeited its living confidence in the efficacy of prayer. May God grant that we may be standing on the threshold of a great reawakening into new spiritual activities ; and that prayer may come to receive its fuller recognition as part of our divine life on earth, and as the focus of our human faith and devotion !

The Rev. J. R. Cohu has given us, in his present work, the results of careful and devout study. Very possibly the conclusions at which he comes will not

in all cases commend themselves to all readers. But he states his views clearly and reverently. He does not shrink from the problems that have been raised by the discoveries of modern science and by the developments of modern philosophy. We may welcome in him a writer who is in full sympathy with the questionings of many a religious-minded and well-read Layman ; and we may be thankful for the frank and lucid manner in which he has endeavoured to combine the explanation of present-day difficulties with the steady maintenance of practical and spiritual teaching.

HERBERT E. WINTON.

FARNHAM CASTLE,

*Sept. 28th, 1908.*

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

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SOME apology is due for adding one more to the legion of books on Prayer. It may well be thought that Dr. Jellett, Canon Liddon and Canon Worlledge, amongst others, have said the last word on this subject.

But the last ten years have witnessed a change little short of a revolution in modern thought, and even Theology has been deeply affected by it. After a cycle of Realism, we are all coming back to a modified Idealism.

These metaphysical terms need not alarm the reader. Throughout this volume we have assiduously courted simplicity and lucidity: there has been much of that *limae labor et mora* which Horace advocates, and we hope these chapters will be found readable. In spite of the common saying "in philosophy truth is obscure and simplicity fallacious," we do not believe that Ruskin, Darwin and Liddon, with all their simplicity, are obscure. The ordinary writer must admire their genius afar off, but he can, at least, try to copy their simple prose. An obscure style may mean Hegelian depth of vision; oftener it suggests the author's own cloudland.

Chapter VI. is, we fancy, the one chapter that may be obscure to the ordinary thoughtful reader, but it can be skipped by all who do not care for the academic jargon of the schools, and the alternative Chapter VII. restates most of its arguments in a more practical way. It was necessary to attempt to meet the philosophic and scientific objections on their own ground, and this Chapter VI. was forced upon us with its analysis of "consciousness" and the metaphysical questions this involves.

Our task has not been as easy as we anticipated. We set out with the intention of combating objections to the efficacy of prayer. At first sight, this seemed simplicity itself. But it soon dawned upon us that there were three distinct classes of readers whose prayer-difficulties had to be met.

Even in this age of cold indifference, there are happy and privileged souls who know one prayer beyond all others: "Behold my delight is in Thy commandments, O quicken me in Thy righteousness." They have their prayer-difficulties: but these are such as arise from their imperfect reading of God's Word, their one Guide. Explain away their doubts by the light of the Bible, and all becomes clear to them.

But with most of us it is different. On many a mind the spirit of a critical and sceptical age leaves its scar now-a-days, if it does no more. In religious homes, they have learnt spiritual truths as children. All their lives they have accepted their creed on



authority, without verifying and assimilating it for themselves. Suddenly they come across a sceptical book, and bring to bear upon it their educated habits of thought and judgment. Unversed in science, and with nothing but traditional views of religion to support them, they are troubled and perplexed, at the mercy of their new instructor, utterly unable fully to weigh his worth or worthlessness. It seems to them as if science had authoritatively spoken the last word on the subject of prayer or even religion. With mingled feelings of irritation and sadness, they begin to question the truths they learnt at their mother's knee. These, too, have their prayer-difficulties.

There is still a third class. From youth upwards they have been trained in the modern historical school of accurate, methodical, exact thought. Truth and Truthfulness of character are to them a second nature. They are fearlessly honest and sincere: impatient of half-truths, preferring to suspend their judgment where no solid basis of evidence is to be found. In their eyes, it is a sacrilege to darken and degrade the soul by accepting on bare authority opinions which their reason cannot endorse and convert into convictions. On one side stand God and His Bible, on the other the verified facts of modern science and of Nature. The two seem to contradict each other. Their hearts pull in one direction, their heads in another; and they cannot see their way to force their reason to walk in step

with their hearts. Needless to say, these also have their prayer-difficulties.

Now, if our subject was to be "prayer-difficulties," it was essential that we should address ourselves not to one class exclusively, but to all three equally. But the kind of reasoning that would appeal to the whole-hearted believer in the Bible would not arrest the attention of the scientific thinker ; while chapters that might possibly interest the latter would be unsuitable to educated men of the world who had no taste for purely academic discussions, and yet wanted *their* scientific prayer-difficulties resolved.

A wiser and more prudent writer would probably have paid due heed to a well-known fable and a familiar proverb. Somewhat rashly, we have endeavoured to write for all three classes, and may fail to please either.

A glance at the general summary of contents will show that Part I. (Chapters I.—IV.) is purely Biblical ; plain, practical Theology. Chapter V. attempts to state the scientific objections to Prayer fully and candidly in a plain readable way. The aim of Chapter VI. is to meet these objections on their own scientific and philosophic ground. Chapter VII. is an alternative to Chapter VI., but couched in simpler language. It deals with the same scientific objections, only from a more practical standpoint, and discards the technicalities of psychology. The last Chapter (VIII.) merely ventures to suggest a few simple rules, or rather

principles of Prayer which the long experience of mankind has found to be helpful.

The skeleton frame-work of the book is simple. Throughout, we stand for a few fundamental truths which we accept (*for ourselves*) as positive, viz. :—

(a) The Immanence of God in His Universe (*plus* His Transcendence).

(b) Man's personality (or soul) is one in essence with God's Personality. He is the Father-soul, we are His Spirit-children, akin to Him, yet absolutely dependent on Him.

(c) This Fatherhood of God involves the Brotherhood of man, with all its responsibilities.

(d) The Universe is one Whole, and God is the meaning of it.

As a matter of fact, (b), (c) and (d) naturally flow from (a) as corollaries.

It may be asked why in Chapter VI. we lay such stress on the abstruse topic of "consciousness" or "personality." A few words of explanation may, perhaps, not be out of place, even though it broaches just those metaphysical problems we would gladly avoid.

*Personality*, human and Divine, is now the keynote of the philosophy of religion. We are pledged to it.

"God . . . . soul . . . . the only facts for me.

Prove them facts? That they o'erpass my power of  
proving

Proves them such."—(*R. Browning.*)

What do we mean by Personality? We have attempted to grapple with this problem in Chapter VI. p. 157; and we must refer our reader to those pages. It is impossible in a few lines to describe this strange mysterious something which subtly underlies all our thinking, feeling, willing. Ever one and the same, this personality, consciousness, or soul calls itself "I," survives all the "fluxes" of the body, binds together tightly for us past, present and future into a connected living whole. Amid the flux of things, there is within us all an immortal centre, the controlling principle of our life, directing everything for us, the nucleus of our being. "There sits the helmsman, his hand on the tiller. There the log is kept, the reading of which is the biography of our individual lives."

It is this personality which gives us the power to say "I am," "I will." And this inevitably leads on to an "I can," "I must," when, at our best and highest, we call into activity this inborn God which is in us all: "the true Light that lighteth every man born into the world"; for modern thought is more and more coming round to the view that our own consciousness is the child of the Universal Consciousness which we call God. It is this personality which

makes each one of us a real "self," with an individuality of our own which is not merged in mankind, not even absorbed, or ever to be entirely absorbed in God. Hereafter, "we shall be like Him," but to be swallowed up in God at the last would destroy our personality, which is eternal.

Personality, whether in God or man, is essentially a self-directing, creative, moral force, the most potent factor in the world-evolution. So much so that *there*, if anywhere, lies for us the secret of the Universe-riddle, if only we can guess or solve it.

For the Universe, if it is a living whole at all, owes its life and unity to an Eternal I AM, I WILL, of Whom it is the self-expression. He alone gives us (His children) and it (His Body) a meaning and a unity. All is one whole, and God is the meaning of it. His self-directing creative Personality, Love Divine, is the driving-power behind evolution, and the one key to it. Nature is an organic whole and not a mere piece of machinery, the result of automatic, unconscious, blind forces, but the orderly obedience of atoms of matter to the I WILL of God. Every moment He is guiding His world-evolution, and so wisely, and therefore so simply, that we sometimes fancy it works of itself like clock-work. We can detect and classify some of God's simple methods, and we call them Laws of Nature. We even go so far as to substitute them for God.

In one sense, there is a faint copy of personality,

X  
an embryo consciousness in plants and in animals,—just as the human consciousness pervades and quickens the very hairs of our head, and our bodily members,—but in man alone is the Divine consciousness explicit, identical in essence and in aim with God's. [We would add, and in Christ alone is it fully and perfectly manifested.]

It is on these two facts, the personality of God and the personality of Man, that the philosophy of Religion now builds its edifice. It reaffirms the Gospel of Christ, and restates in other words S. John i. 1—10.

Y  
Replace revealed Religion philosophy never can. It helps us much, but, at the best, it is and must ever be only religion's handmaiden. Spiritual things must be spiritually discerned. If we discard revelation, then our one guide into all truth must be the consciousness, the soul, the light within,—not human reason. The philosophy of Religion with its Divine Immanence re-echoes S. Paul's words: "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the spirit of God. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." It is only because the spirit of man is one in aim and essence with God's Spirit that there, in our soul, truth abides in all its fulness. Therefore S. Paul's caution against "the enticing words of man's wisdom" are needed now as ever. In Chapter

VI. Part II. we have tried to show that human reason in dealing with the Universe-Problem is setting itself a task to which it is, by its very nature, unequal. It may spell out the message of the soul, it can never dictate it.

Yet religion cannot dispense with thought. The Spirit must first guide us into all these deep truths, for religion can never be resolved into pure thought. But our faith, to be real and explicit personal experience, *must* call in reason as its subordinate ally. Someone has defined faith as "reason not aware of itself that it is reason." Be that as it may, a reflective religious experience is as much more rich and helpful than ordinary religious experience, in the same proportion as natural science is more rich and practically useful than the plain man's opinions of the natural world.

As already hinted, another great truth that flows as a natural corollary from the relationship between the Personality of God and our individual personality is this. If we are God's spirit-children, if the Fatherhood of God is a literal fact, then this means the essential Brotherhood of men, and, (in the light of our Father's Love and our Lord's Life and vicarious suffering,) serving God in serving our brother-man becomes the truest expression of our oneness with God. We all know that God's Eternal Purpose, as declared by Christ, is the establishment of His Kingdom here and now on earth, a Kingdom of Love, which will deliver

mankind from evil in every form. God has chosen, in His mysterious Providence, to work out man's welfare through man's co-operation, and it is not only our great privilege, but our bounden duty to be "fellow-workers together with God" in this Great Divine Purpose.

Where recent religious thought seems chiefly to have gone wrong is in laying too much emphasis on Divine Immanence, identifying God with His Universe or with man. Better a thousandfold retain the antiquated Deistic conception of a merely Transcendent God, far out of our reach, Who set the world agoing then left it to work itself out, than the crude Immanence of which we hear so much nowadays. At any rate, the old idea of Transcendence gave us a majestic conception of God, Maker of Heaven and Earth, while this pseudo-Immanence theory utterly belittles Him, belittles Christ, belittles sin.

We want the creed of Divine Immanence, but we cannot for one moment dispense with God's Transcendence, and the due proportions of both must be preserved. Man is in nowise God: He is akin to Him, His child, one in essence with Him, but absolutely dependent upon Him.

On these two chief foundation-stones,—(a) The Divine Immanence (*plus* Transcendence) and (b) The Brotherhood of Man, or God's Eternal Purpose for the universal welfare of mankind,—is built the whole of what follows in these pages.



So deeply impressed are we with the importance of these two postulates that we must crave our readers' patience for the constant repetitions of these two facts in our pages. We crave their kindly forbearance also for occasional digressions, but we hope that these *obiter dicta* will play the part of the Greek Chorus—and prove equally conducive to the main plot <sup>a</sup>.

Apart from a long series of Articles which have appeared in Theological and other Journals, few authorities have been specially consulted. Several standard works, of course, have been read, notably Jellett (largely quoted in Chapter VII.), Liddon, Worlledge and Gore. Chapter VI. was fully written before we read Henri Bergson's "Evolution Créatrice" and found that we both held practically identical views. After reading Bergson's book, and Mr. Tyrrell's excellent essay on it, the latter portion of Chapter VI. (Part II.), dealing with the human reason, has been rewritten, and it now embodies many hints, and even whole passages in that section, borrowed from these writers. Here and there paragraphs have been copied from our commonplace-book. Many are original, some are borrowed, but the source of the loans is not always given, and unfortunately it is now impossible to trace and acknowledge them all.

Our thanks are due to two friends for their re-

<sup>a</sup> Some of these digressions are bracketed in the text.

vision of the proofs, and to the Bishop of Winchester for that most difficult part of an author's task—the selection of a Title.

We are aware that our style is rugged, but we have elsewhere explained the difficulty of writing in a borrowed tongue. Many of the views here expressed will be considered broad, but a writer can only rise up to the level of his own convictions. We sincerely hope that these, and many other flaws, will not seriously militate against the one aim we have had in view,—the humble, earnest, reverent desire to promote, so far as in us lies, the interests of true religion.

J. R. COHU.

ASTON CLINTON,

*Oct., 1908.*

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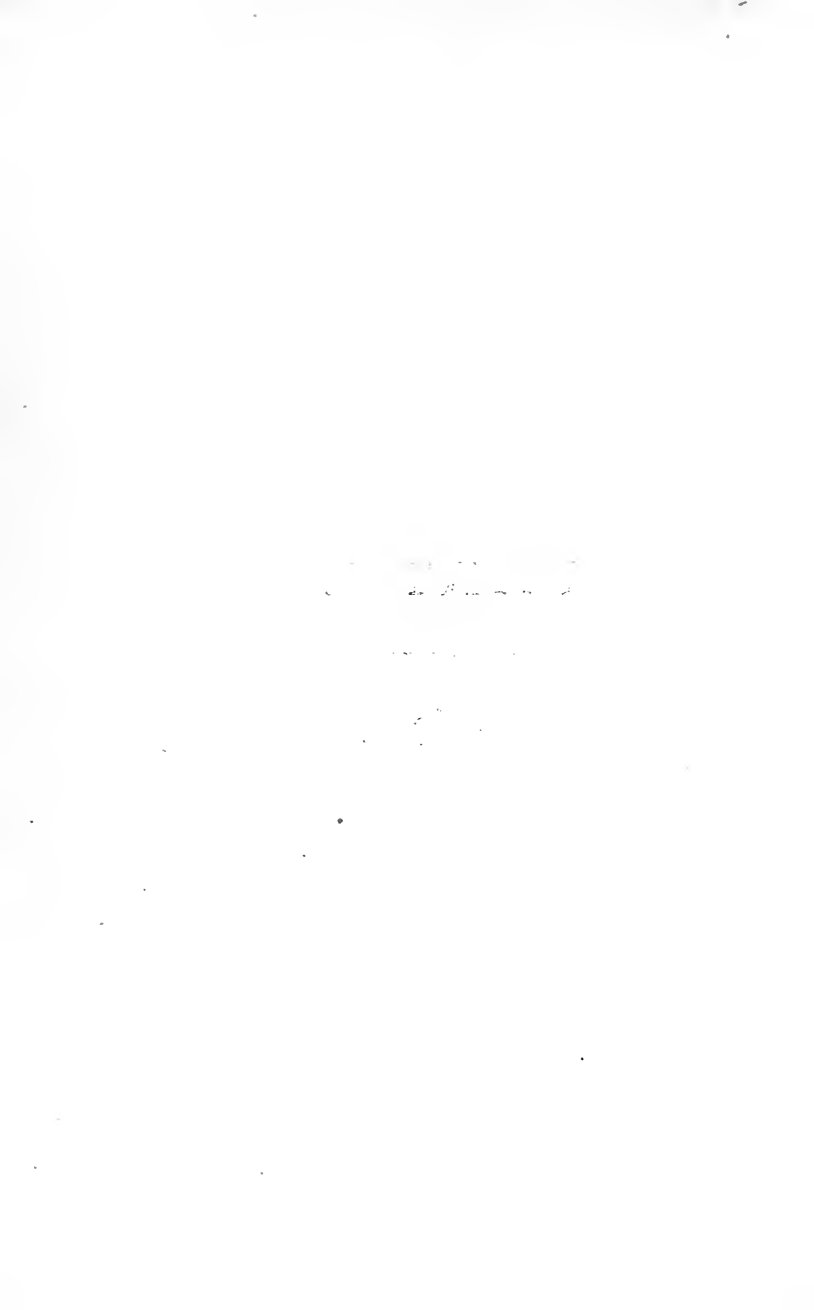
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PART I.

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**Biblical.**



## CHAPTER I.

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THE PRAYER - INSTINCT.

### *Argument.*

WORD-PICTURE illustrating the truth that man's soul is directly sprung from the Father-Soul, God. Man's soul-hunger and self-dissatisfaction, a proof of God's indwelling Spirit. Hence the universal prayer-instinct. Divine Immanence is Christ's message to mankind—hence His optimism—but He carefully safeguards the Transcendence of God. Much of our modern 'New Theology' a caricature of Christ's revelation. [Yet the attitude of the Church towards 'new thought' (in genuine seekers after Truth) should be like Gamaliel's, passive, tolerant, receptive.] Divine Immanence is prayer's *raison d'être*. Prayer is the soul's cry for reunion and communion with its Divine Source. Prayer is hard, but it is the soul's life-breath; and the greatest thing we can do for self, for man, for God. Our prayers are a condition mysteriously attached by God to the granting of many of His blessings, because He respects man's freedom, and will not lay His finger on our wills. Prayer is man's consent to God's Will, whereby he freely enlists himself as a fellow-worker with God in His Eternal Purpose of delivering mankind from evil in every form, i.e. the establishment of His Kingdom of Love on earth. The Fatherhood of God means the Divine Immanence in every man, i.e. the brotherhood of man; and this involves corresponding debts and duties, which prayer's purifying and strengthening power alone enables us to fulfil.



## CHAPTER I.

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### THE PRAYER - INSTINCT.

#### A.

**A**N illustration often acts as a barb to the arrow which carries home truth to the mind, so we shall begin with a parable.

Men of science tell us that this earth on which we live is a chip<sup>a</sup> of the Sun, cast off from it ages upon ages ago. Originally our planet and the Sun were one, but, in course of time, our parent the Sun sent earth his child to live an existence of its own apart. At first the earth-planet was, even as the Sun itself, a globe of intensely glowing gas, which gradually became a ball of liquid fire, still further cooling, shrinking, wrinkling till, at last, it assumed its present form. But our father, the Sun, has not altogether cast us off and left us to shift for ourselves. True, we are now separated from him by oceans of ether, a kind of thin air, so cold that frost itself is as fire in comparison. Yet it is only because the Sun's warmth and light can quickly pierce this vast separating gulf, ninety millions of miles wide, that plants, animals, man, that is to say, life in any

<sup>a</sup> "Chip" is scientifically inaccurate, for it conveys the idea of something broken off a *solid* block, and the sun is not, we know, a solid mass at all.

form can exist on this globe at all. In a word, this earth's very life depends absolutely on its keeping in actual touch with the Sun, whose child it is, from which it originally sprang, made in its own likeness. In the Sun we live, and move, and have our being.

Like all parables, this word-picture may prove helpful if we take its central idea and do not press the accidental points of resemblance too far. Man, as we know him, bears no more likeness to God than does this cold, shrunken, tiny earth to the blinding splendour of the Sun blazing at noon-day. Yet man is God's child, and God is man's Father. The last word of modern philosophy has come back to the Bible view, assuring us that "the very existence of *conscious* beings, endowed with a spirit or soul, is the best proof of the existence of a pure, omnipresent Spirit, God, immanent in them, and from Whom they have sprung." This is precisely what we are told in the first chapter of Genesis: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness"; while in Gen. ii. we read: "and the Lord God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life: and man became a living soul." Man's spirit or soul is essentially as much part of God Himself, as this earth of ours is a chip of the Sun, the source of its light and warmth.

Even at the cost of being tiresome, let us carry this analogy still further. Just as the Sun has thrown off our planet, its child, to live an existence of its

own apart, yet ever linked to its parent by a bond which cannot be broken, dependent on its father's warmth and light for its very life ; even so has God our Father placed us, His offspring, on this earth, apparently at a distance from Himself, to live our own life. But never has He lost touch with us. The eternal loving Father-Spirit holds us as safely within the sphere of His living influence, as the pull and tug of the Law of Gravitation keeps the earth from flying away from the Sun<sup>b</sup>. In God we live, and move, and have our whole being. From Him we sprang, and our true life hangs on our keeping in actual touch with His life-giving light and warmth.

What has all this to do with prayer?<sup>c</sup> Much every way. If it is true that man, though weak and frail, has a unique worth and dignity of his own as directly sprung from God: if it is true that man is not only an animal, but closely akin to God, made in His express likeness with a soul which is of the same essence as the pure Spirit of God,—then the universal instinct of prayer here finds

<sup>b</sup> Here, of course, the analogy breaks down. It is physically impossible for the earth to get out of touch with the sun, whereas we, as moral beings, are at liberty to cut off our connection with God's Holy Spirit and quench it.

<sup>c</sup> We should hardly have considered it necessary to state that here, and in similar passages (e.g. pp. 15, 21, and 25), the ? and the "if" are rhetorical, expressive of our own convictions ; but a friendly critic, to whom we are heavily indebted for revising these proofs, has suggested that they indicate the suspicion of a doubt in our own mind. *They certainly do not.*

its true explanation. It is the soul's yearning cry for reunion with its Divine Source.

To carry on our analogy between the spiritual and the natural world, this instinctive yearning of the soul after God, which finds its natural expression in prayer, is but another illustration of the universal Law of Attraction, which is to be seen at work everywhere,—in the material and moral, as well as in the spiritual world. That weird, inexplicable principle of attraction and repulsion, pull and push, by its strange magnetic force ever draws like to like. In the world of matter, it crystallizes kindred minerals without flaw or fault. In the moral world, it links soul with kindred soul. And in the spiritual world the same law holds good. The idea is well expressed in Sergieff's famous phrase: "The foundation of prayer is the yearning of the image towards its prototype, as of like to like." Hence the universality of the natural instinct of prayer: it is as impossible for it not to exist, this instinct of prayer, in man's heart, as it is for water not to find its own level, or for the magnet not to attract the needle to itself. "My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before the Presence of God?" "As panteth the hart after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." This is the cry of every human heart. In this life man is an exile. He is parted from his true home; cut off from his kith and kin.

Home-sick, filled with a passion, a void, a craving of which it does not understand the secret, our soul cries, with all the agonized earnestness of a disappointed and tortured being: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou thus disquieted within me?"

"My soul is athirst for God." If we wanted further proof, over and above Bible-revelation, of our Divine Sonship, surely we have it here in the insatiable restlessness, the divine self-dissatisfaction innate in every human heart. This "wasting fever of the heart" attracted the attention of ancient thinkers; it is with us now. Whoever and whatever we may be, saints or sinners, wherever in time we stand, we are dissatisfied with what is so far achieved by us, both in our life-work and character. Good men and bad alike, in so far as they are finite wills conscious of their own individual intents and purposes, agree in being dissatisfied in this world. The righteous man is dissatisfied with his present opportunity to express his will: "the good that I would, I do not." The conscious sinner is dissatisfied with the very will that he is at the moment trying to express: "all is vanity."

We look back upon our past and say: "so much have we done"; the future lies before us as the field for deeds yet to be done by us; the present is our opportunity for action, or self-expression, and the clearer our insight of our life's true purpose and

goal, the more earnestly do we echo S. Paul's wail : "to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not." Our conscious will is ever trying to express itself, but at no point on this side of the grave can we rest satisfied. We feel that we are at war with ourselves, and full of hatred with our own imperfections. Our soul within us is disquieted and restless, not with the dissatisfaction of gloomy feelings, but with the insatiable eagerness for further deeds, for more complete self-realization. Our soul is literally in need, an hungred, athirst, in prison, a wanderer from home.

Thank God for this soul-hunger ! This Godward restlessness is the purest and best desire we can know. It is this very discontent that constitutes our real and true self. All else about us, fortune, feeling, hope, fear, joy, sorrow,—these are mere accidental belongings, our mere clothing ; but the sharp pang, the inarticulate home-sick yearning of the soul, "this personal warfare with my own temporal maladjustment to my own ideal" which we are unable to interpret, but which is nothing else than the Divine germ come forth from God and longing to find its way back,—this is "the immortal centre within us," which is our real self. Again we say, thank God for this Divine unrest, for it is God the Holy Spirit Himself revealed and striving within us. "Blessed are they that hunger" : "He filleth the hungry with good things." This soul-hunger is the assurance that the Divine germ within us is healthily

alive ; and, in prayer, it is this unsatisfied "immortal centre" within us which the Holy Spirit of God searches, "making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

"My soul is athirst for God." Do *we* thirst for God? Well, if we will, in God fully revealed in Christ the soul may slake the thirst of the ages. This sphinx-riddle of our restlessness, which Psalmist and the wisest thinkers of old alike felt so keenly, yet could not unravel, Christ has interpreted. God, the Father-Soul, is the meaning and satisfaction of this thirst. In reunion and oneness with Him, its Fountain-Head, the dreariest, the darkest, the most restless soul may now find illumination and peace,—a peace which all earthly good things, all the tentative guesses of human philosophies have never been able to give it. "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

But the Christian message to mankind—Man is God's child, God is man's Father—is not the modern grotesque assertion, man is God. It simply declares that the Divine germ is in each one of us : "this is the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." It assures us that in a sense every man is potentially a revela-

tion of God, by the ideal of his conscience if not by his actual character. And it is because every man is the child of God, because God is verily immanent in us, that even the worst of men feels a Divine constraint laid upon him at times, yields to the impulse of the Divine Spirit within him, and so does that which is just, pure, lovely, kind. The message of Christianity is no blind identification of God with man: it affirms identity in difference, likeness amid unlikeness, dependence as well as kinship. God is not less God because we kindle our flame at His Sun, nor is our light the less our own because it is borrowed.

“The Temple of the Lord is holy, which Temple ye are.” It was to illuminate this truth that Christ came. He manifests it in all its fulness in His own Person. To each one of us He says: “Rise to the consciousness and dignity of your noble origin and destiny. You belong to God, you are part and parcel of Him, you are His own child. Forget not your lineage, your immense possibilities, your responsibility. For the education of self, and the good of others,—also children of God, and citizens of Heaven, whence they came,—you are placed here on earth awhile. Be about your Father’s business. Let your meat be to do His Will. If God be for you, who can be against you? The true child of God, doing his Divine Father’s Will, is as invincible as his God. ‘Be ye perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect.’ Make your Father’s purpose



your own, and be a fellow-worker together with Him."

This is the message of Christ. Jesus is essentially optimistic. He believes in and appeals to the likeness of God that is in every man. He has nothing in common with the pessimistic view of human nature which insists on the total depravity and utter worthlessness of natural man. In the parable of the lost sheep and especially in that of the Prodigal Son, given in the fifteenth chapter of S. Luke, He explicitly shows us that bad men are not by nature callous and hopeless sinners, only sheep that have wandered from the fold, and know not the way back; not useless and worthless human stuff, but souls that carry beneath the rust and grime the genuine stamp of their divine birth: not outcasts whose death would be a good riddance, but living children of God loved and missed in their Father's home. This wreck, Jesus is for ever insisting, is not the man—only his lower self, the bushel which hides the light that is there all the while. Release the true self that lies hidden beneath this unnatural obstacle and you come to the real man. "*When he came to himself*": this was Jesus' reading of publicans and sinners—the pariahs of civilization. He moved among the people with a sanguine expectation; full of enthusiasm and faith in man; ever demanding achievements of the most unlikely, and, therefore, constantly gladdened by a wondrous response. Zacchæus, the hated tax-gatherer, makes a vast

surrender. S. Mary Magdalene, the by-word of society, has in her the passion of a saint. S. Peter flings off his weakness, and changes into the rock of the Church. Jesus treated men as actual sons of God, and they gladly responded.

Jesus Himself tells us, "I am come not to destroy, but to fulfil the Law and the Prophets," and knowing Him to be very God of very God, not merely the perfect and ideal man, perfect in a unique and paramount way as compared with other good men, but God incarnate, manifesting in Himself in all its fulness the Godhead which in us is but in the germ,—we are not surprised to find in His revelation the culmination, the concentration, the fulfilment of all religions ever since the world began. Christ's Gospel contains the heart of all that is best in them, it focuses into itself the highest and deepest truths of the universal religious consciousness. All prophets and seekers after God, Jewish or otherwise, before Christ had emphasised either the Immanence of God, i.e., the nearness of God, the kinship of man and God,—or the Transcendence of God, i.e., the aloofness of God, removing God beyond the ken of man altogether,—Christ first of all, and once and for all, combined and harmonised the Immanence and the Transcendence of God. And the religious consciousness can yield up neither of the two conceptions, except with its own life. Actual living religion, the religion which is both trust and devotion, requires a God Who is both very near

to man, akin to man; and yet it demands a God Who is far above and beyond man, a God of Whom it can truly be said, from the very fulness of His perfection, "no one can really know God but God Himself."

This is the God revealed to us by Christ: a God Who is above all else our Father, a God Whose very child I am, a God Who dwells in me; and yet a God "Which is in Heaven"; of Whom even Jesus, in Whom God was fully manifested, has to say "My Father is greater than I," and "of this hour knoweth no man, no not the Son even, but the Father only."

Why, in dealing with Prayer, do we say all this? Because it is on the Immanence of God that the very reasonableness of prayer hangs; and yet one is almost afraid nowadays to speak of God's immanence, for obvious reasons. The one-sided modern utterances on the Divine Immanence too often belittle God, by the grotesque assertion that man is God; belittle Christ, by raising us all to the dignity of "God in the flesh," making the difference between us and Christ only a difference of degree and not of kind, so that, at any moment, one of us may become a real Christ; belittle sin, by making it not merely a means to good, but an actual good; sin and pain becoming so many additional perfections in God's universe. "Sin itself is a quest for God," say they.

This is a parody of Christ's message, yet we should be truly grateful to these seekers after God who have the courage and candour thus openly to state their honest convictions. If every true teacher and thinker would really teach up to the level of his own knowledge and conviction, the battle would sooner be won. We do want "scribes instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven to bring forth out of their treasures things new and old." And the Church is ever ready to recognize new truth and adopt it; only it must be *verified* truth. If an authoritative Church opens its lips to prophesy at all, it must be with a "Thus saith the Lord."

<sup>d</sup>[The reluctance of the Church at any time to reconstruct its faith is more than pardonable—it is right. It should *not* do it if it can avoid the doing of it—and live. The new truth must be proved to it to be a Gospel, which it is a sin not to preach, before it can accept it.

But truth is ever progressing, yet never reaches its goal. The truth of one generation is transcended by the truth of the next, and invaluable as are our catholic creeds, they do not cover the whole truth; no word-definitions ever can. They do not even cover the whole truth as we know it now.

These creeds are the sum-total of the thoughts of men concerning the nature and character of God and His relationship to man, but only man's thoughts

<sup>d</sup> For explanation of these brackets, see Introduction, footnote.

on this subject up to certain periods in Christian history<sup>e</sup>. God's Holy Spirit, "the giver of all good gifts,"—gifts of the brain as well as of the heart—has for hundreds and hundreds of years since then been guiding us into all truth, and religious ideas must keep pace with this advance in knowledge of mind and heart. Large re-interpretations and re-statements of theological belief are, therefore, necessary if Christian belief is to be placed on a level with our modern requirements.

"Mankind has never civilized itself except by humanizing its God," someone has truly said, and this is only another way of saying, that in proportion as God's Holy Spirit enlightens men's hearts,—and this He is doing daily more and more,—our view of God becomes newer and truer, and we must re-state our creed accordingly. To many of us such a task seems rash and irreverent, and it is often so. But when honest, courageous, enlightened seekers after Truth reverently endeavour to absorb new truths, to adapt old dogmas to modern wording, to enlarge and follow the teaching of the Holy Spirit, our attitude towards them should be like

<sup>e</sup> We do not wish to be misunderstood. Few, we fancy, will refuse to recognize the intrinsic merits of the Apostles' Creed; fewer still, the beauty or inspiration of the Nicene Confession of Faith. But we do sympathize with those who fail to see the same perfection and inspiration in the Athanasian Creed. Even in the two other Creeds, we must not forget that they rightly borrow Bible word-pictures, and we must interpret them accordingly. (See especially Bishop of Chester's article in *Guardian* of Sept. 17, 1908.)

that of Gamaliel. "Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves, what ye intend to do as touching these men. . . . Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."

We believe that at the present time "a revolution at least as considerable as that effected by the Reformation has got somehow to take place in popular religious ideas if Christianity is to continue a real living force in modern life." This does *not* mean that Christianity must capitulate to the modern world, give up its own platform in order to adopt alien principles. Nothing of the kind! On the contrary, Christianity is just re-discovering Jesus and His real Gospel. God's Holy Spirit, Which has guided us into all truth as we see it now, is more and more leading us back to the real Christ<sup>f</sup>: the Christ Who tells us that man is by nature God's child, and this earth is the scene of God's Kingdom. The Christ Who sees good in the weakest and vilest: Who sees worth in birds and flowers, and beauty in all things: the Christ Who has an implicit faith in man: the Christ Who judges man not by his quality as an

<sup>f</sup> "The modern change of emphasis from a Christianity of right belief to a Christianity of right character and right social service, has brought us nearer to Christ, and has made us both able and willing to learn from Him."—Hastings' "Dictionary of the Bible," extra vol., p. 14.

isolated moral unit, but by his contribution to the common well-being of mankind.

Therefore, when an honest seeker after God openly states his candid convictions, let us not judge him rashly. Let us test his teaching by Christ's standard, and welcome the new utterance. The man is unselfishly contributing his mite. If the coin does not bear God's stamp, its false ring will soon be found out. In any case it makes thinking men examine their own opinions or convictions, state their objections,—if they dislike the new teaching,—proclaim over again their own belief in as straightforward and intelligible a way as he has done, and thus strengthens, confirms, enlightens faith.]

So it has come about that while not budging one inch from our firm stand on the unshaken foundation of our faith in God's Transcendence, modern views have brought us back wondrously to Christ and His assertion of the Immanence of God as well as His Transcendence. Realizing that there is "an immortal centre in us all," we realize man's dignity, man's immense possibilities, his equally great responsibility. Pessimism is crushed out of our hearts, for we now see that pessimism, hopelessness, despair, whether it afflicts the individual or society, is a disease, a sin against God, an insult to Him, a denial of His Fatherhood.

But, while thus grasping our intimate kinship

with God, we do not forget our absolute dependence upon Him. Now, more than ever, do we echo the Psalmist's words: "I was brought low, and He helped me." At the same time, the Psalmist's yearning cry for a closer walk, a closer communion with his God, becomes but the natural expression of our inmost hearts, the soul's natural craving for re-union with its Divine Source: "My soul thirsteth for God, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before the living God?" or, again, "As for me, I shall behold Thy Face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake in Thy likeness."

This instinctive yearning of the soul for re-union with the Father-Soul is the idea which underlies the best-known definitions of prayer; for instance, "Prayer is communion with God"; "prayer is correspondence with God"; "prayer is the conscious converse of the soul with its God"; or as Canon Liddon writes, "prayer is the act by which man, conscious at once of his weakness and of his immortality, puts himself into real and effectual communication with the Almighty, the Eternal, the Self-existent God." Each of these gives expression to the profound truth that in prayer the soul of man instinctively turns towards God as the one and only object which satisfies all its deepest yearnings. Thus only can it escape awhile from this "cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd," stifling prison-house of its earthly tabernacle, and breathe its own pure, native, bracing air: "as



panteth the hart after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." The soul feels a void which nothing outside God can fill, but God can and does fill it full, and satisfies its deep cravings. "Thou didst turn and refresh me; yea, Thou broughtest me up from the deep of the earth again."

B.

If prayer is this; if it is the channel through which the soul of man, "thirsting after its God," draws its living waters from the Fountain-Head; if prayer is the means by which God again breathes the breath of life into the stifling soul, and refreshes it when it is weary; if prayer thus brings the divine nature within us, clay-clogged as it is, into intimate quickening touch with its original Divine Source,—then, surely, prayer is to us a matter of life and death. Well may Baxter call it "the life-breath of the soul"; or G. Herbert, "the soul's life-blood." Is it any wonder that saints of God refer to prayer in such strong terms? Listen, for instance, to Bunyan: "if thou art not a praying person, thou art not a Christian"; or Hooker, "Prayer is the first thing with which a righteous life beginneth, and the last wherewith it doth end"; or S. Chrysostom, "The just man doth not desist from praying until he ceaseth to be just."

And One far greater than any of these says: "Men ought always to pray, and not faint." Yet, strange

as it may seem, earnest fervent prayer, which for the true child of God should be as instinctive as breathing, is hard to man as we find him. It may be easy enough to "say" our prayers, but to pray with all our heart and strength, with a soul "thirsting after God," to realize the actual immediate Presence of the living God, to believe vividly that God is listening to our heart's voice, to have a soul so attuned to the Holy Spirit's prompting within us that our own spirit is thinking with God in all its thoughts, our heart burning within us with a glow kindled by the Divine Fire,—this is not so easy.

It is so much easier to drift into the languor which provoked the prophet's cry: "There is none that calleth upon Thy Name, *that stirreth up himself to take hold upon Thee.*" "No man is likely to do much good in prayer," says Bishop Hamilton, "who does not begin by looking upon it in the light of a serious work." And our Lord's own teaching and example bear this out: for not only does He Himself so earnestly wrestle with God and agonize in prayer, that His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling upon the ground, but, in a striking parable, He presses upon us the need and power of importunity in prayer, as being the best test of our earnestness.

Yes, true availing prayer is hard work, but it is worth while. All our moral worth, all our influence, all our life-work hang on our character, on the set or bent of our soul, that is to say, on the actual mental,

moral, spiritual condition we have reached at any given moment. In other words, our work, be its sphere what it may, must be what we ourselves are. The only way to make others good is to be good in ourselves. Therefore, if we desire to minister to others, and for this end we were born, there is one solemn obligation which rests upon us,—to sanctify ourselves, to rise to the full stature of our manhood, to develop “self” to the utmost of its capacity.

Prayer alone can do this. We shall never do it till we bring the divine germ within us into living touch with the Father-Soul whence it sprang, and thus let Him pour His own character into our hearts. For in prayer we can draw without stint, if we will, upon the infinite power, knowledge, goodness and love of God.

“If we will,” for there must be an open door through which God can enter into our hearts to give us the gifts and graces He longs to communicate to us. In God’s sight, we are men, not machines; moral beings with a free-will of our own, and God respects our freedom too much to force us even to our own good. He stands at the door of our heart, and knocks, if any man will open unto Him. No one but ourselves can open the heart-door<sup>g</sup>, and we must do it of our own free-will and accord. Prayer opens that door; the prayer which is not mere lip-

<sup>g</sup> This point is well brought out in Holman Hunt’s famous picture “The Light of the World,” in which the door has *no handle outside*. Cf. Hastings’ “Dictionary of the Bible,” ii., 432.

service, but the heartfelt yearning cry of the soul athirst after the living God. It is the soul's imploring cry to its Father-Soul to come in and make His abode there. Then, and not till then, does God gladly enter into our inmost heart. He fills it full of Himself, so that we feel as He feels, think as He thinks, will as He wills. Our very character is transfigured. We go forth truly minded to do His pleasure, full of His goodness, His virtue, His strength. We are now fitted to be fellow-workers together with Him in the establishment of His Kingdom of love and peace here and now on earth, to be literally saviours of our fellow-men by promoting the spirit of love and unselfishness between man and man, so that they shall live with each other as brothers, sons of a common Heavenly Father.

And, like Christ, we *must* lay stress on this Kingdom of Heaven on earth. To our Lord, the Fatherhood of God means His indwelling in every human being, and, therefore, the essential Brotherhood of man. The Incarnation has drawn us into one family by declaring us one with God, one with our fellow-men. This involves precisely what God's Kingdom on earth implies, sacrificing self on the altar of humanity's need. From the creation of the world this has been the eternal purpose of God,—the welfare of mankind. The Bible tells us this in so many words: "The will of God is that all men should be saved"; that is to say, delivered from evil in every form. But He means man

to work out his own salvation. "By man came death, and by man came also the resurrection of the dead." It was to build this Kingdom that Jesus laboured. He began this moral resurrection of a dead world. To the same service He summoned, regenerated, trained His disciples. He placed these regenerated few among their fellows as the light of the world, the salt of the earth, the little leaven which leaveneth the whole lump. Now there are millions upon millions of these men pure in heart, true citizens of God's Kingdom here on earth. It is through them that the world is being daily regenerated ever more and more; through them that the world-conscience is being quickened so that sympathy and service are everywhere taking the place of indifference and selfishness. Not only Christians but multitudes of others have caught their inspiration and are spending themselves for the good of others, and are unwittingly serving God well in serving men. Ever nearer and nearer are we drawing to that golden year when "mercy and truth are met together: righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Let us believe implicitly in this golden era, for it will assuredly come,—we can help it on, we can retard it, but come it will. But,—and this is what concerns you and me—it is through us individually that the work has got to be done. "They without us shall not be made perfect."

But what has this to do with prayer? Everything.

If to be a Christian means to be in close relationship not with God alone but with our fellow-men, and to serve God in serving them,—we must purify ourselves before we can minister to others, and we have seen, that nothing but prayer, or actual touch with God, will enable us to do this. Again, all answer to prayer depends on this one condition, whether our prayers are in harmony with the Will of God. “This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, *if we ask anything in accordance with His Will, He heareth us.*” Therefore, knowing that the Will of God is the universal well-being of all men, the establishment of His Kingdom of Love and peace on earth, if our prayers do not come into line with this, they must fail. Once more, if it is through man that the universal salvation of mankind is to be achieved, if we are each one not merely our brother’s keeper, but far more our brother’s brother, and individual men and women are the pathway by which others are to be drawn into the Kingdom of God,—then, what a high value we should set on prayer! Not only is it through prayer that we strengthen and purify ourselves for our life-work of ministering to others, but prayer is the power that moves the Hand which rules the Universe. Thus prayer becomes the greatest thing that we can do for self, for God, for man.

For self,—since it transfigures our very character more and more into the likeness of God with Whom it brings us into living touch. For man,—since it

is on our character that our influence hangs. For God,—since it is only through the close relationship with Him which prayer fosters, and our consequent readiness to serve Him by serving our brother-men that we can be fellow-workers together with Him in His eternal purpose of establishing His Kingdom here on earth.

Therefore, if it is true that as a man prays, so is he; if it is true that we must *be*, before we can *do*; if we are wise, we shall put prayer first, and everything else second.

*“Let Thy merciful ears, O Lord, be open to the prayers of Thy humble servants; and that they may obtain their petitions make them to ask such things as shall please Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*





CHAPTER II.

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THE FORM OF PRAYER.

## *Argument.*

IN what words should we pray? Prayers without words. Emerson's "All men pray; all their prayers are answered," examined. Prayer, regarded as a mere "asking for what we want and have not," a low, narrow, unscriptural conception. Homage and humility, praise and thanksgiving,—placing God first, man second,—the key-note of true prayer. Reverence and submission to God's Will must precede petition and intercession.

*Bible-proofs.* In the Old Testament prayers, and especially in the Psalm-prayers, we see how right our Church is in moving us to approach God's Throne of Grace by these natural steps: confession, thanksgiving, praise, meditation, supplications and intercessions. Above all, our Lord's Prayer "teaches us how to pray." Christ, in it, sets reverence, homage, bowing to God's Will, first; intercession pervades it; self comes last.

*Objections considered:* e.g., "God is in Heaven: thou on earth: let thy words be few"; "ye shall not be heard for your much speaking"; brevity of our Lord's Prayer, and especially of His Agony-Prayer, and of the Publican's prayer; God wants life-service, not lip-service; all these seem to forbid such long prayers as would be needed to include all so-called essential elements of prayer. Yet these very objections prove exactly the reverse.

*Laborare est orare*, a half-truth. True that "prayer without works is dead," and God does not like dead prayers. Christ's religion is not "otherworldly." He expressly condemns that sickly religious egotism which shuts itself off from the service of man. But Christ's whole life and teaching proves that we must first get God's touch in prayer before we can work our best.

## CHAPTER II.

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### THE FORM OF PRAYER.

#### A.

PRAYER, we have said, is the channel through which the immortal soul of man, "thirsting for God," draws its living waters from the Fountain-Head; the means by which God again breathes the breath of life into the stifling human soul,—the soul in need, athirst, in prison; and refreshes it when it is weary.

If this is so, in what words, then, does the soul speak to the Father-Soul in its conscious converse with God in prayer?

This may seem a matter of no consequence whatsoever, a mere accident of prayer. Indeed, are there not many excellent prayers without words? Prayer need not be vocal. You may pray without falling on your knees, or opening your lips. "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed." There are prayers which are felt and not spoken. It may be a pleading note wrung from a heart of pain, it may be one sob of ecstasy, but yet it can express supplication, contrition or thanksgiving. Such prayer brings with it the feeling of consolation. It comes like the rush of tears to the over-burdened heart, and in its very weakness there is strength.

May it not be true that just as "the best portion of a good man's life" consists in "his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love," so it is with these little, wordless, unremembered prayers? It is in such instinctive, almost unconscious, moods that we best express our true character.

Was it not in this sense that Emerson said: "All men are always praying, and all their prayers are answered"? "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed." If these strong ruling desires are our real prayers, all men have them, so all men are always praying. And these ruling desires have a strange power, a strange trick, of fulfilling themselves. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." Our several characters are but the sum of the ruling aims and desires which we have cherished and pursued. We *are* what we would be, although we are *not* what we would be, i.e., our character is the sum-total of our ruling desires, though it is not the self-expression of our highest ideal. So it is that in their ruling desires all men pray, and as these ruling desires have a strange trick of registering themselves in our character, and so fulfilling themselves, all our prayers are answered. So we should be very careful of our unspoken prayers. When we consciously speak with God, we realize His Presence, and in the light of that pure Presence we sift, and purge, and raise our desires. But when we pray without words, when we simply cherish a strong desire, which, though it

may spring from nothing better than a sensual or selfish craving for ease or pleasure or worse, has yet all the force of a prayer, we forget the pure Presence in which we stand; we make no effort to purge, sift and raise our souls, and before we have recognized our evil plight, we may know the misery of a granted prayer.

Strictly speaking, however, these unspoken prayers do not come within the scope of Prayer if we define it as: "The *conscious* converse of the soul with its God." But there are prayers without words which are essentially the conscious communion of the soul with the living God. There is an attitude of the soul which Archbishop Benson describes as a "silent, uplifted, but unasking condition of mind, formulating no supplications, requests, desires or petitions, but rapt in the contemplation of God, adoring Him,"—an attitude which has at all times appealed to deep religious natures. "My soul, be thou silent unto God."

It was in such an attitude of contemplation that S. Paul beheld the beatific vision. "I knew such a man in Christ (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell); such an one caught up to the third heaven . . . and he heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (cf. Is. vi.). But, although such rapt visions are not unknown even now, this converse with God, rapt in contemplation of Him, adoring Him, is, perhaps, more adapted to an Isaiah or a

S. Paul than to ordinary mortals. There is, undoubtedly, in this conception of silent contemplative, absorbed prayer, an element which lies at the very root of all prayer,—heartfelt reverence—"prayer's silent background." But, if prayer is "conscious converse with God," our reason, and will, and heart must take an active part in the intimate communion of the soul with its God, and the soul's yearning will find utterance in words.

But, whether we include words or not in our conception of prayer, what we now wish to examine is rather this: What is the soul's main attitude towards God in the act of prayer? What is the intention with which we approach God? We wish, surely, to give expression to some feelings and aspirations. What, then, are the feelings, the aspirations, the thoughts uppermost in our hearts, when we thus kneel in the immediate Presence of God? They will vary, naturally, with the suppliant's various moods; but, taking prayer generally, do we come before God in prayer merely as petitioners, asking for what we want and have not? Or is our communion with God something other, and better, and larger than this?

This is a vital question which goes right down to the root of the mystery of prayer. It is mainly because our idea of prayer is low and narrow, because we have not yet risen to a large, generous and spiritual conception of it, that prayer is so often

slighted or misunderstood. Christians, on the one hand, complain: "The unanswered prayers of believers are a mystery to us." Agnostics, on the other hand, regarding prayer as a mere begging for gifts, speak of it in scorn as "a machine warranted by theologians to make God do what His clients want."

For our own sake, therefore, as well as for the honour of our Faith and our God, it is essential that we should, in this important matter of prayer, believe what is true and do what is right.

We all pray; but many of us have very vague notions of prayer. Not for one moment do we wish even to suggest that the faculty of prayer is an intellectual gift: that a man, before he can truly pray, must understand the whole theory of prayer, be able to explain lucidly and convincingly the various parts played by the reason, the will and the heart respectively in prayer, or to solve all its hard problems. Far be it from us even to hint at such a conception of true prayer! Real prayer is a matter of the heart far more than the brain. Now as ever, those who pray best talk least about it. A little child, an unlettered peasant often prays more truly and effectually than a theologian or a ripe scholar. Indeed, the more simplicity there is in our heart as we kneel before God, the more our attitude in prayer in God's immediate Presence is like that of a little child, the more likely are we to be heard of our Father Which is in Heaven, for "of such is

the Kingdom of God." Perhaps one chief reason why prayer for most of us is so hard is because we find it so hard to be simple.

In our contention that many of those who pray have very vague notions of prayer, our meaning is quite different. Is it not a common thought that prayer is a crying to God for help or relief; merely asking God to give us those things which we want and have not? Do not many of us, when we have prayed, as we often do, more or less fully for our own and others' needs, stop there, and call this the whole of prayer?

If we may say so without irreverence, too many people in their prayers look upon God in the light of a relieving officer. With such a low, narrow, unspiritual view of prayer, is it any wonder that even Christians are grieved and puzzled because their petitions often remain apparently unanswered? Is it any wonder that their low view of God naturally reacts on themselves, so that they approach Him in words that no Apostle would have dared to use? Is it any wonder, if Christians so misunderstand prayer, that others do so too, and with a sneer, even challenge believers,—as in the historical "hospital test" suggestion,—to put the efficacy of prayer to the proof by actual experiment?

Undoubtedly, petitions and supplications do form a great part of prayer; "in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Constituted as we are,



deeply conscious of our own littleness and weakness, our natural tendency is to cry to God for help : "I was brought low, and He helped me." In its proper place and proportion, this natural dependent instinct is not only pardonable, it is right ; but to look upon God as a Being the whole or main purpose of Whose existence is to answer prayer, is an attitude towards Him which is radically wrong, and it is no wonder that "we ask, but receive not, because we ask amiss."

Search the Scriptures. There we see holy men drawing near to God. True, they approach Him as children come to a loving Father, with the love and trust which casts out fear. But they never forget the relationship in which the creature must always stand to the Creator ; the sinner, to the All-Holy ; the ignorant, to the All-Wise ; the selfish, to Him Whose aim is the well-being, not merely of the individual, but of all mankind.

Face to face with his God, sinful man instinctively feels awed. God is so holy and great ; he is so little in body and soul alike. The better and holier the man, the more deeply and consciously does he realize his own utter unworthiness. "I am the chiefest of sinners," naturally exclaims a S. Paul.

And what then ? The first cry that instinctively rises to his lips is an outburst of adoration and humility. "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts : the whole earth is full of His glory. . . . Woe is me ! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips,

and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips ; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." (Is. vi. cf. S. Luke v. 8.)

Homage and humility, this is the key-note of prayer. God, not man, is the central idea of the soul vividly realizing the immediate Presence of the All-Holy. But if we realize our insignificance : "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man," then does God's Holy Spirit immediately prompt the comforting assurance of our Father's infinite love and gracious goodness to usward, and the humbled soul at once rises on the wings of praise and thanksgiving : "Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

We "think and thank." So is our soul now attuned to the Will of God, now prepared to offer up petitions for our own needs, and intercessions for others. Our sense of God's greatness and our own littleness, our consciousness of God's gracious Providence in all His works, will so have filled our hearts with awe, reverence, loving trustfulness, that our very requests will now fall into line with the perfect Will of God. We shall no longer be in the mood to drag His Will down to ours, but ask Him to raise ours up to His. "Nevertheless, Father, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." We shall not complain of unanswered prayers : we shall realize that our Father, in His infinite love and wisdom, knows far better than we, His ignorant wilful children, what is expedient for us. Whether our requests are granted

or denied, we shall trust Him fully, and accept cheerfully, and with gratitude, His decision in every case.

But of this we may rest assured, that, apart from humility and homage, praise and thanksgiving, implicit trust and loyal bending of our will to His, we are not in full touch with God, nor are our prayers as true as they might be.

B.

*Bible proofs.*

The more we read our Bible, the more clearly shall we realize that this is its conception of true prayer. It is because the compilers of our Prayer-Book were so steeped in the Scriptures, had so thoroughly imbibed the spirit of them, that, in the General Exhortation, these are precisely the steps by which they urge us to approach God's throne of grace: confession, thanksgiving, praise, meditation, supplications and intercessions. So, too, in the Westminster Shorter Catechism we have this definition of prayer: "praying is the offering up of our desires unto God, in the Name of Christ, for things agreeable to His Will, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of His mercies."

Let us turn to the Bible itself. In reading the Old Testament, we must remember that prayer did not form an invariable or indispensable part of worship in those early Hebrew days. Sacrifices

were the principal and most essential factor; they were the visible expression of awe and reverence, joy and gratitude, contrition and atonement, and the substitute for our modern prayers. But the natural, universal instinct of prayer, the spontaneous outpouring of the heart's gratitude, despair, entreaty is there all the same, and nothing can exceed the fervour or beauty of such supplications as Hannah's, David's, Solomon's, or the majority of the Psalms.

There is Hannah's prayer (1 Sam. ii. 10), on which Mary's "Magnificat" is modelled. What are they but one rapt outburst of praise, adoration and thanksgiving? So, again, Habakkuk's Psalm is expressly called a prayer, yet it is one glad song of praise, a *Te Deum*. Or consider many of the Psalms, which are nothing if not model prayers. They may, at times, be heavy with sighs, but they also glow with rapture. They offer the sacrifices of a meek and contrite heart, but they are also songs of gladness and adoration; they make their requests known unto God, but they also meditate on His glory, and the gracious works He has wrought; they appeal to His mercy, but they equally extol His Providence.

But "'tis an assured good to seek the noblest," so let us leave man's prayers, and take our Lord Himself for our Example. What does our Lord's Prayer teach us about prayer? It has set once and for all the standard form and tone of all

true Christian prayer: "after this manner pray ye." Lofty as is the ideal, it is within our reach, for it was essentially to plain men that Christ chose to give Himself and His message. Yet with all its simplicity, there is such profundity in the Lord's Prayer that we have a product such as the world has never seen and will not see again. A peasant child can understand enough of it to make it the expression of his daily needs, but the ripest scholar, philosopher and saint cannot exhaust all its possibilities of meaning. In a few minutes it may be committed to memory: but it is the work of a lifetime to learn it with the heart. It is a prayer which every being who believes in God can use, yet to no two of us does it mean exactly the same thing, for each man uses it in proportion to his belief. What, then, does it tell us of prayer?

Its every clause is thrown into the form of a petition, yet it contains but one request for those earthly good things which usually monopolize our own prayers;—"give us this day our daily bread." Even this solitary petition for temporary blessings is emptied, redeemed of all possibility of selfishness by being converted into an intercession as well. Its very wording,—"*give us (not, me) our (not, my) daily bread,*"—compels us to ask it for our neighbours and all mankind as well as ourselves. More than this, consider where our Lord places this petition. It only comes after we have prayed the earlier and greater petitions: "Our Father, *Which*

*art in Heaven: Hallowed be Thy Name: Thy Kingdom come: Thy Will be done, as in Heaven, so in earth."*

Thus does our Lord's Prayer clearly prove that, in His eyes, the praise and glory of God must come first and foremost, that is to say, reverence and homage. Then comes a petition for the accomplishment of God's gracious purpose for the universal welfare of mankind, followed by a prayer for loyal submission to His Will. After,—but only after,—“we have exalted God's glory, and merged our littleness into God's greatness, and bent our will to minister to God's Will, only then are we allowed to express our own wants for ourselves.” Then only may properly follow entreaty for our bodily and spiritual needs, our cry for forgiveness, and the final appeal for deliverance and protection from danger.

Thus, then, did saints of God pray in Bible-days; this is our Lord's own answer to the human heart-cry: “Lord teach us to pray.”

With such prayers as these in our minds,—and it would be easy to add many more, such as our Lord's Intercessory Prayer in S. John xvii.,—it is impossible that we should conceive of prayer as simply an asking, an insisting on a supply of our real or imaginary wants.

Our prayers, naturally, will change with the varying moods of the soul. Thus it is that in the Psalms, which sweep the whole gamut of human thought and emotion, as on a harp with a thousand

strings, the prayer is at times a tender, sustained, devout meditation on God ; on what He is, what He does, how He stands related towards us ; at times it is a mournful, passionate, persistent quest after Him. Now it is a rapturous burst of praise, now it takes the form of earnest supplication for a supply of the Psalmist's own wants, or of a generous intercession for the needs and sins of his fellows. Here, it burns and glows with imagination and passion, there it breathes a sacred and divine calm.

But, though the Psalms echo all the various moods of the soul, their one distinctive note throughout is the same that we see in our Lord's prayers, in the *Magnificat*, the *Nunc Dimittis*, in the prayers with which S. Paul's Epistles abound,—it is the uplifting, the gathering up of all the faculties of the soul in an earnest, intense ardour of reverence, love, and praise, as well as petition. This alone constitutes sincere, thoughtful spiritual communion and intercourse with the Father of Spirits, in Whom we live.

### C.

But, it may be asked, how is it possible for us ordinary men to soar to this high plane, to make this lofty ideal our own? It is, doubtless, true that adoration, praise, thanksgiving, meditation, supplication, intercession are one and all desirable in prayer, but who is sufficient for these things? Besides, does not the Bible itself tell us: "Be not

rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter anything before God : for God is in Heaven, and thou upon earth : therefore let thy words be few" ? (Eccl. v. 2). Does not one greater than Ecclesiastes also expressly warn us : "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do ; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking" ? Is it not also true that the one prayer of man commended by our Lord is an appeal for mercy, and consists only of some half-a-dozen words : "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner" ? Did not our Lord Himself in His Agony pray, thrice over, a prayer which is contained in half a verse (S. Matth. xxvi. 39) ?—If each day had forty-eight hours, and each week fourteen days, we might possibly pray as fully as is proposed, but, as things are, it is impossible. The best prayer is not lip-service, but life-service : "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," as in the sight of God. *Laborare est orare.*

No one will endorse these suggested objections more sincerely than the man of prayer, and they call for an answer.

Not for one instant do we imply that every single prayer must contain every single one of the constituent parts of which prayer is composed. Prayer, if it is real and sincere, must be the natural outpouring of the heart, and, as we have so often said, our prayers, naturally, will vary with the changeful colours



and moods of the soul : now it will be full of joyful rapture, now troubled and disquieted within us, and the heart-voice will be its echo and attuned accordingly. Christ's own prayers amply prove this. But even the shortest of Christ's recorded prayers, in His Agony, contains every single one of those essential factors of a true prayer which He Himself gives us in His own model prayer,—except, of course, the confession of sin and petition for forgiveness. And if, like Him, we always approach God as “Our Father, Which is in Heaven, hallowing His Name, longing and working for the coming of His kingdom, loyally bending our own will to His,” then, whatever our mood, however brief our prayer, there will be that humility, adoration and thanksgiving which is essential to true prayer. It need not be vocally uttered, but it will be there, all the same, as a silent background.

We do not hold a brief for long prayers. “After this manner pray ye,” says our Lord, and His model prayer only consists of some fifty words. But our Lord's words about avoiding “vain repetitions and much speaking” do not for one moment imply that He condemns such prolonged prayers as are the genuine utterances of heart-felt devotion, the impassioned outpouring of the really earnest and sincere soul. Over and over again did our Lord Himself “continue all night in prayer to God.” In the same manner, our Lord's warning “use not vain repetitions” does not exclude repetition in prayer.

Thrice did He Himself, in His Agony, pray in the self-same words. What our Lord does condemn is the mere formal, unthinking, mechanical saying of prayers,—be they long or short,—where the heart does not voice and endorse the lip-words.

The publican's prayer, we know, is short, but, as we have already seen, so is Christ's in His Agony. Yet will anyone presume to say that the publican just knelt down, said his six or seven words, and straightway got up again and went his way? Was our Lord's agonized prayer merely the work of the few moments it would take to utter its few words? Anyone who has truly wrestled with God in prayer, "offering up prayer and supplication, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that is able to save him from death, and been heard in that he feared" (Heb. v. 7), will readily supply the answer.

As to the passage from Ecclesiastes, "Be not rash with thy mouth, &c.," the whole gist of it is to emphasize the very point on which we lay so much stress, viz., that reverence and humility lie at the foundation of all prayer.

But all this is beside the mark. So long as our whole heart pours itself out before the Lord, such true communion of the soul with its God is absolutely independent of time, or place, or words. Let our prayer focus our whole heart and soul on God, with the intensity of reverence and humility, of confession and entreaty that we see in the Publican, and his seven words are enough, or no words at all.

Our sole contention is that to conceive of prayer as merely an asking for what we want and have not, won't do. We must have that large, reverent and spiritual conception of prayer which the very wording and order of the petitions of our Lord's model prayer sets before us as our ideal. Beside it, we cannot but feel that our own prayers are unworthy of the name, they are so narrow, selfish, unspiritual. We approach God irreverently. We dictate to Him; we place ourselves first, and Him second, and call *that* the importunity which Christ enjoins.

There is an importunity which God loves,—the importunity which is the outcome of a sincere, trustful, earnest, impassioned soul. If prayer is "conscious converse with God," it needs effort and time. For effort and importunity in prayer Christ Himself has prepared us by His own example (Heb. v. 7). His own prayers were strenuous and impassioned from that hour in the wilderness when angels came to minister to the prostrate Man of Sorrows, on to that awful Agony in the Garden when His sweat was as it were great drops of blood. Ah! but that was because prayer meant so much more to Jesus than it does to us.

How much prayer meant to Jesus! It was not only His regular habit, but His one resource in every emergency. When perplexed, He prayed. When hard pressed by work, He prayed. When hungering for fellowship, He prayed. When tempted, He

prayed. When criticized, He prayed. When fatigued in body or spirit, He had recourse to His one unfailing secret of prayer. There was no emergency, no difficulty, no necessity, no temptation, no sorrow that would not yield to prayer, as He practised it.

There is one objection we have left unanswered : "The best prayer is life-service, not lip-service. *Laborare est orare.*" This is one of those plausible half-truths which cannot be dismissed in a paragraph. It must have a section to itself. But Christ gives us the key to the answer. He knew, what we still have to learn when we so glibly quote the proverb "To work is to pray," that no real work can be done till we have obtained through prayer the unmeasured power which nothing but communion with God can bestow. He knew that in prayer we borrow not only God's goodness but His Almighty strength. And because Christ knew that at the background of all power for work lies prayer, therefore He always made time for prayer, even at the cost of a night's sleep. Often He had no leisure so much as to eat, but He always found time to pray.

D.

*Laborare est orare.*

The world says "to work is to pray." Christ tells us : "he works best, who prays best." And ex-

perience proves that the men who have "laboured more abundantly than they all" are precisely those who, like Christ and S. Paul, have placed prayer first, and work second, the men who have learnt the inspiring and energizing power of prayer. Prayer first gives them all the divine strength they need, then constrains them to be up and doing; to spend themselves in man's and, therefore, God's service; to quit them like men and be strong. These are they who "whatsoever their hand findeth to do, do it with their might."

But there *is* a sense in which *laborare est orare* is essentially true. There *is* a prayerful state of mind which is *not* acceptable to God at all, prayer that is not immediately followed up by action. Of prayer, as of faith, it is literally true that "prayer without works is dead," and God does not like dead prayers.

Studying Christ, we discover that His great purpose was the Kingdom of God, the reign of the spirit of love among men, and that He believed this to be the supreme concern of His Father Whose Will was His meat and drink. It was to build this Kingdom that Christ laboured; it was to this same end that He summoned and sanctified His disciples, and placed them amongst their fellow-men as the little leaven that leaveneth the whole lump. Christ's ideal is the ideal of service, to serve God in serving your fellow-man.

At the risk of being charged with repetition, we

must insist on this truth over and over again. It is Christ's Golden Rule, the "secret of Jesus."

For this work God wants *men*, not religious dreamers who seek the Kingdom of God in meditation or cloister, when God is calling aloud to them, all the while, to forward that Kingdom of God in the only possible way, by imparting to their brother-man the best that is in them, be that what it may.

The conventional religion of Christ's day commanded the doing of certain formal deeds: that of our day commands the acceptance of certain creeds. At the basis of both lies the vicious individualism which asserts a righteousness in the sight of God apart from all question of one's value in the world. We must go back to Christ and His message. The true service of God, He held, is the service of man, and the righteousness which leaves this out of its reckoning is no righteousness at all. "Whosoever will save his life, shall lose it, but whosoever will lose his life for My Sake, the same shall save it." And what does He mean by "for My sake"? "For I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me," "for inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

This is the message of Jesus ever ringing in our

ears, the life-work He appoints us, the one test by which we shall be judged on that Day when we give an account of our stewardship. Here He says to you and me : “ make some man, woman, child or animal the better or happier for your having been near,—do something for somebody. Your revealed kinship to God implies corresponding responsibilities and obligations to God’s other children, your brothers and sisters. For this end were you born. Come unto Me, first of all ; let My Holy Spirit enter into your heart and make it pure,—sanctify yourself, and then, take up My cross, ‘lose your life for My sake and the gospel’s,’ spend yourself in the service of God by serving your brother-man. You have some God-lent talent, communicate ‘it to others.’”

Lazarus is ever at Dives’ gate, the drink-degraded Lazarus, the sweated Lazarus, the ignorant Lazarus. Hold out a helping hand to him and you will find that you are clasping God’s hand at the same time ; for God is Himself at work wherever men are doing His work and Will, wherever they are working with unwearied compassion among brother-souls for the uplifting of humanity, dealing sympathetically and helpfully with the ignorance and misery of mankind. “The will of God is that all men should be saved,” delivered from evil in every form ; be a fellow-worker with Him. God’s victory can only be achieved through man’s willing co-operation. Do your share. To leave the world as you find it is

to stunt yourself, to rob your brethren, to deny God and fly in His Face.

This was ever Christ's message. It is often said that the religion of Christ is too "otherworldly." This is exactly what it is not, though men ever try to make it so. Our natural tendency is far too much to concentrate our gaze on our own souls; to fly feebly from a sinful world instead of manfully stemming the evil of it; to indulge in that sentimental, morbid, mystic frame of mind which is for ever meditating on "things above," the things of the next world, dreaming of the joys of Heaven before our work on earth is half done. We must, of course, be "pure in heart," true citizens of God's Kingdom, real members of Christ ourselves before we can serve God in serving men; but history has clearly shown that over-absorption in the contemplation of God may distract a man as completely from the Christ-like service of his brethren as absorption in the pursuit of one's own pleasures. "Ye men of Galilee," said God's angels to the Apostles after the Ascension, "why stand ye gazing into Heaven?" Their work lay elsewhere. There is a religious selfishness little less fatal to the true Christian calling than the vulgar selfishness of the worldly-minded crowd. This is the meaning of the paradox, "Jesus was a foe of religion in so far as it interfered with active service, just as much as He was a foe of selfishness and greed." His whole attitude to the men of His day proves that He laboured



to free them from the superstitious idea of religion as they understood it,—a fear of God which made a multiplicity of religious exercises of one kind or another necessary in order to appease His wrath, and so distracted men from a true conception of God as their Father, and from their real life-work, the service of man. A form of religion which only or mainly consists in endless worship and contemplation, and makes all else seem barren and empty, is a self-delusion on man's part and unlovely in God's eyes. "Many whose lives are blameless, their orthodoxy unerring, but whose indifference to the disadvantages of their less favoured brethren has permitted to exist the bad social conditions of which they are the victims, are greater sinners in God's sight than the drunkards, burglars, harlots whom society condemns, punishes, and outcasts." It is of such Christ says, "ye shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against men : for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."

Yes, that insulated religious individualism which shuts itself off from the service of man is more than a blunder : it is a sickly form of egotism which stultifies our very existence, makes us mere cumberers of the ground, a disgrace to our divine lineage, deniers of God.

So there is a true sense in which "to work is to pray." Indeed, there are times when God is positively grieved with men for praying, if we may

reverently say so. "Why criest thou unto Me?" He says to Moses; "speak to the children of Israel that they go forward." It was a time for action, not for prayer. The Israelites had already prayed to God. He had answered their prayer, and definitely told them what to do, so now they were praying at the wrong time. It was a time for deeds, not words.

But, though the Christian endorses the creed that Christ's ideal is the ideal of service, serving God in serving man,—and precisely because this is his heart-creed, therefore does he place prayer first, and work second. Like His Master, he knows that no real work can be done till we have obtained through prayer the divine power which nothing but "God's touch" can bestow. He knows that this close touch with God gives us, as nothing else can, that force of heart and steadiness of purpose, that purity of will which lies at the foundation of all true work. He knows his own littleness and weakness; he knows how vast is the life-work before him; he knows that in prayer he can borrow the strength of Almighty God; therefore he asks God beforehand for His enabling strength and guidance. "Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk: for I lift up my soul unto Thee." "Teach me to do Thy Will and quicken me, for Thou art my God." And, all said and done, experience proves that, in their value and in their results, work prefaced by prayer, and work that is not, are as wide apart as the poles.

*Recapitulation.*

To sum up. All this we know well. We know that in prayer we are speaking to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and, therefore, homage and reverence are His due. We know that God is our All-Wise loving Father, therefore we can readily accept His decisions, whether our requests are granted or denied. We know that God's eternal purpose is the universal welfare of all men, and that our petitions often clash with this; therefore we must add to our prayers "nevertheless, Father, not my will but Thine be done." We know it is not enough to pray "Thy Kingdom come," we must hasten that coming ourselves.

All this we know: it is so simple and reasonable, —to talk about; but do we pray as if we believed and accepted it in our heart of hearts?

What are our prayers really like? Are they the rapturous outburst of grateful song: "praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise His Holy Name"? Are they calm and reverent meditations on the gracious works and ways of God, and His infinite goodness to us men? Are they true confessions of sin, and a heartfelt yearning, thirsting for that oneness with the great Father-Soul on which the very life of our soul hangs? Are they impassioned longings for the establishment of God's Kingdom of love and good-will on earth, with a firm resolve to help it on ourselves? Are they real acts

of intercession for our fellow-men, followed by prompt action? Do our heart and life echo the words of our lips, "Thy will be done in earth, as in Heaven"? Are our prayers, in a word, the sincere outpouring of our full heart, the true voice of the Divine germ within us, prompted by the Holy Spirit? Then shall we surely be blessed, and ours is the gracious promise: "Be anxious for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ."

Is this the case with us? Or are our prayers only, or mainly, importunate petitions trying to persuade God to let us have our own way, to enrich us with all we want and have not? Are they even less or worse than this, a cold, formal, unthinking repetition of the same stereotyped phrases day after day, with all the heart and life gone out of them,—a mere recitation of the same personal, selfish wants and desires?

Millions of Buddhists believe that praying in itself, however formal, perfunctory and mechanical, is a meritorious act and all-powerful with God. They have a set prayer of six syllables: "*Om mane padme Hum*," words which the majority of them do not even understand. This prayer is not only repeated orally many times a day by myriads of worshippers, but it is multiplied indefinitely by a very simple

method. These four words of prayer are inscribed on praying-wheels, which are made to revolve either by hand or by water-power. Whoso sets these wheels going is credited with as many prayers as the wheel makes revolutions. The more revolutions, the larger the number of prayers, and therefore the greater the blessing obtained.

Is this mechanical praying unknown among professing Christians?



### CHAPTER III.

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FOR WHAT MAY WE PRAY?

### *Argument.*

WHAT may we pray for? One school of thought says "everything"; a second, "nothing"; a third, "spiritual gifts"; a fourth, "prayer is only of subjective value." The second, or scientific objection formulated, and its full consideration postponed. Bible - view of prayer based on the Fatherhood of God. Every wise father frames rules and principles for the orderly guidance and welfare of his children, but this does not hinder them from making their requests known unto him. Even so, our Father grants His children's reasonable requests, and when a Father of Love denies, it is because to grant would be a violation of Love. The Bible urges us to pray for both spiritual and temporal gifts—Unqualified as the promises of answer to prayer may, at first sight, seem, the Bible itself attaches one condition to effectual prayer,—it must be in Christ's Name. What this essential proviso connotes. Expression "Name of Christ," "Name of God," examined and explained. Prayers "in Christ's Name" are those prompted by His Holy Spirit, and, therefore, such as He can endorse. Therefore, the Bible's large promises of answer to prayer are incompatible with all selfish or narrow prayers, with any requests that clash with God's great plan for the universal welfare of mankind.



## CHAPTER III.

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### FOR WHAT MAY WE PRAY?

#### A.

**I**N the preceding chapters we have attempted to define the nature and the form of prayer. We have tried to show that prayer, "the thirsting of the soul for the living God," is the natural cry, the instinctive yearning of the divine germ within us for reunion with the Eternal God from Whom it sprang. "The foundation of prayer is the yearning of the image towards its prototype, as of like to like."

We have also seen that prayer is much more than a mere asking for what we want and have not: that the common conception of it is too low, too narrow, too unspiritual. At the background of all true prayer must ever lie adoration, thanksgiving, confession, submission,—as our Lord's own teaching and example clearly prove.

But, having said this, it is well to remember that prayer does include asking and receiving, asking even for personal and temporal blessings, still more for the "gifts of the Holy Spirit." "In everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

This is the subject of the present chapter. Does God answer our prayers? It is an immense topic, and perhaps on no other point is modern opinion so divided. One school of thought emphatically believes that "everyone that asketh, receiveth." Another equally dogmatically affirms "no one that asketh, receiveth." A third holds the balance evenly between these two extremes, and maintains that it is right and proper to pray for spiritual graces, but that it is not right to ask for temporal blessings. There is still a fourth set of thinkers who allege that the only effect of prayer is to be looked for in the heart of the suppliant; that is to say, prayer really secures none of the objective benefits for which we pray, but simply brings the heart of the suppliant into harmony with God.

Which of these four are we to believe? Here we touch a question which has perplexed some of the deepest religious minds, and dogmatism is out of place. Those who believe in the unlimited power and efficacy of prayer base their conviction on the Bible promises, and on their knowledge of God as their loving Almighty Father: those who deny or limit the efficacy of prayer, on the other hand, commonly base theirs on rational and scientific grounds. They maintain that God's rule is a reign of Law, not of caprice; that prayer for *temporal* blessings, certainly, is asking God to suspend and violate His own fixed and unalterable natural laws, in other words, to work a miracle in order to show

favour to this man or that. In fact, it is to ask for a moral impossibility.

With the purely scientific objections to prayer we do not propose to deal now, though we hope to state and examine them in a future chapter. [Our debt to these modern men of science is immense. As honest and indefatigable seekers after truth, they have let in a flood of light upon every sphere of human life and thought. They have taught us to be impatient of half-truths, not to go beyond our facts, to suspend our judgment where no solid basis of evidence is to be found, to wait patiently till new light comes, rather than indulge in plausible guesses or generalize without positive data. They have taught us also to see unity, law, progress in God's universe. Thanks to them, we are all evolutionists now, and this discovery has coloured all our modern thought. It has retaught us our Bible, and suffused history, even for the least religious mind, with the idea of a loving Providence as the driving-power behind the evolution of the human race. It has set Christianity in a new light as the goal and crown of all the religions of the world ever since the creation of man.

Science and religion are comrades working side by side on a vast and unfinished problem. Let us both realize the problem is unfinished. One day each will have completed his section of the work, and the two solutions will be found to harmonize. Then misunderstandings between religion

and science will be impossible; now they seem almost inevitable. For the quarrel between religion and science, we religionists are mainly to blame in the past. We did not realize that our own solution of the problem was very unfinished work as yet. Our ignorance of this fact made us too imperious, lordly, dogmatic, and, for a time, in self-defence, science copied our dogmatism. Now both are beginning to recognize the fact that they are but beginners, and the field very vast. This has taught each side humility and the sense of comradeship. We see now that science and religion are like two converging lines of railway, still far apart, but bound one day to meet. Honouring scientists as we must do for their generous ardour and unselfish devotion in the service of scientific truth, we are confident, when they assure us that prayer is a moral impossibility on purely scientific grounds, that their assertion is founded on honest, conscientious and intelligent conviction, and it must be met in the same spirit. We shall attempt to do so in Chapters V.—VII.]

This chapter is meant for readers who are ready to accept the Bible as the final court of appeal, and to abide by its verdict in the matter of prayer. We should say in answer to the question, "For what may we pray?" it seems to us that the Bible distinctly states that we may rightly pray for anything whatsoever which it is proper for God's children to ask of their Heavenly Father, *as God's loyal children*,—temporal blessings included.

- We hope to show that this proviso, "as God's children," is the one and only condition which the Bible attaches to effectual prayer. And it is a pregnant and suggestive stipulation.

Our Lord assures us that God is, above all else, our Father. Now a wise and good father has rules by which he guides his own life, and his intercourse with his household. Thus only can he have an orderly and happy household. But can he not, without violating these rules, listen to his children's requests; *show* them what he is doing for them always, and why, at times, he cannot give them what they ask; infuse a cheerful courage and perfect trust in his love and wisdom into their breasts when they have to do without what they wished to have; and, at times, both grant them their desire and enhance the value of his gift by the thoughtful and tender kindness with which it is bestowed? The children of such a father instinctively recognize the wisdom and goodness of his rules; the justice of his demand that they should observe them. But does this hinder them from ever coming to him with a request, or prevent him from ever granting it? On the contrary, it begets in them a confident expectation that he will listen to their reasonable requests.

So it is precisely with us. We are God's children. He is our Father. As God's loyal children, we, on our side, know that we are sons and daughters of a loving All-wise, Almighty Father, members of

His large family. We know that our Father's one aim and will is our welfare, our truest and highest welfare. With perfect confidence, therefore, we make our requests known unto our Father, for we are sure that if our request is a reasonable one, if it is not inimical to our own or to our brethren's well-being,—and we are not selfish enough to wish our own interests to clash with theirs,—God will grant it. We also know the ruling principle which guides our Father's own life and His intercourse with His household; the rule by which He steadfastly abides. We know that our Father's Will and unchangeable purpose is the salvation of every single one of His large family of children, their deliverance from evil in every form, the evil from which all our miseries spring,—in other words, the establishment of His Kingdom of love and peace here on earth. This is our Father's Golden Rule, and He also demands that His children shall observe it. And if God's rule means our own and our brethren's best good, who wants to break it? Who would ask God to give him what is inconsistent with his own or the general welfare? Who would ask for what Love must deny?

Here, then, surely, we have the key to our great question, "For what may we pray?" We may pray for whatsoever is truly consistent with our loving Father's eternal purpose, the universal weal of mankind. If our request accord with this purpose of unchangeable love, we may be sure that God will

grant it. If we are simply seeking some personal gratification or indulgence, something which would not subserve our own best good and the general welfare of the human race, we may be equally certain that God will not answer our prayer in the form in which we ask it, and we ought to be very thankful that He does not. "God's Love knows no limits but those which Love itself imposes. When Love denies it is because to grant would be a violation of Love" (Godet).

### B.

To this view of the efficacy of prayer it may be objected, and not unnaturally, that it unduly narrows the far larger, the unqualified promises of the Bible. In the Bible, many will say, we have large promises of answer to prayer, promises made to plain people, and, surely, these promises bear their own clear meaning written plainly on the face of them. The very wording of these promises appears to leave the choice of his requests to the discretion of the man who prays. Therefore, to limit his choice as you have done, does not seem consistent either with the letter or the spirit of the Bible-promises. It does not meet the case to say that the individual must be merged in mankind, and gratefully accept for himself some subjective blessing in answer to his prayer, some spiritual gift which may be as good as what he prayed for, but is nevertheless something very

different from the thing, the objective benefit, he actually wanted. "It is not so nominated in the bond."

But is it absolutely true that the plain Bible-promises of answer to prayer leave the choice of his requests to the man who prays, and in no wise limit the scope of prayer? Let us examine these promises a little more closely.

"Whatsoever ye ask in My Name, that will I do" (S. John xiv. 13).

"If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (S. John xv. 7).

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (S. Luke xi. 9).

These passages of unbounded promise might be multiplied indefinitely, but these three may, perhaps, be taken as a fair and candid sample of them all. At first sight, it does seem as if Christ in them set practically no limit to the power of prayer; and, for the true child of God, there is none.

"Whatsoever ye ask in My Name, that will I do" is absolutely and literally true: yet it does not follow that anyone can pray for whatsoever he chooses, and he shall have it. Common experience proves only too clearly that daily there are many earnest prayers offered which seem to remain unanswered. Our own common-sense assures us that the granting of an explicit and specific answer to



every prayer would lead to absurd anomalies. Two men might faithfully pray, at one and the same moment, the one for fine weather, the other for rain. Or we might honestly ask for something which seemed to us essentially good in itself, and yet was really quite inconsistent with our own or the general welfare. In a word, it would take the government of the world out of God's hands, and place it at weak wilful man's mercy and caprice.

How then are we to reconcile these two facts? On the one hand, God apparently gives us specific and unqualified promises of answer to our prayers: on the other, there is the obvious fact of prayers innumerable to which no answer has been vouchsafed. Can we harmonize these apparent contradictions? Is the discrepancy between man's everyday experience and God's large promises real or on the surface only?

As we have seen, the promises are as large and general as can be. They arrest the attention by their very largeness. They arrest it, too, by their obvious contradiction to facts and experience. But where does the contradiction come in? In every single instance, these promises are guarded *by their very wording*. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in *My Name*": "*If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you*, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Even where no direct condition is inserted in so many words (e.g., "Ask, and ye shall have"), we

must bear in mind that the words are addressed, and the promises made, to men who are the disciples of Jesus, and only in so far as they are His disciples.

This essential proviso connotes a great deal more than meets the eye, and gives us the key to the whole problem. In every single instance, there is one essential condition, expressed or understood, one clear stipulation attached to God's promises, which a plain man can see and grasp. *Prayer must be offered "in the Name of Christ."* "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name, that will I do."

And what is meant by "asking in the Name of Christ"? Does it merely imply that, provided we conclude our prayer, be it what it may, with the formula "in the Name of Jesus Christ," we have fully satisfied God's one condition, and our prayer will be granted? A great many people seem to think so, but Christ intended nothing of the kind.

Throughout the Bible, the word "name," in such expressions as "the Name of God," "the Name of Jesus," stands for a very great deal more than it usually means to us. We should nowadays define a name as a label attached to persons or things to enable us to distinguish them from each other. But, in the Bible, the expression "Name of God" goes immeasurably beyond this. It stands for the personality of God Himself; His whole nature, attributes and character. It forcibly expresses every single feature or quality of God that we can possibly think of when we picture Him to ourselves.

In the New Testament, we find the expression "the Name of Christ" constantly thus employed to denote the character, the dignity, the authority, the very Personality of Jesus, as the Son of God. Over and over again, we are told that Christ's disciples were persecuted "in His Name"; worked miracles "in His Name"; were baptized "in His Name." In each case, it means that the disciples were so steeped in Christ's Spirit, so prompted and animated by it, that they thought as He thought, felt as He felt, willed as He willed. "I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). In them, Christ's prayer found its answer: "I pray that they also may be one in us: as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee." So it was that Christ's disciples were one with Christ, His accredited representatives.

Bishop Gore cites a happy illustration. "An ambassador is sent to a foreign country in the name of his king. What does this mean? It means that the ambassador who speaks in the name of his country, does so, not because he represents his own views, but the views of the power which sent him." For the time being, and in his official capacity, he is invested with all the dignity and power that stands behind the sovereignty of his own nation. He is its full representative. In his capacity of ambassador, he is the mouthpiece not of his own views but of his country. In so far as he is loyal to his trust, his nation sanctions, endorses his words and acts, and is ready to support and enforce them

with all the weight of its authority. If he fails to be a true representative of the views of his nation, the nation repudiates and recalls him. He is no longer acting "in its name."

Precisely in the same way, when we approach God "in the Name of Christ," we come as accredited representatives of Christ, and because we are at one with Him. We are invested with His character. Our relationship to Christ is so close that "our mind is His mind, our point of view His point of view, our wishes His wishes." If we are thus truly His friends, Christ endorses our words and actions, sets His seal to them, but it is on the express condition "if ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you." Otherwise, we are none of His.

So, when Christ says, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name, I will do it," He gives us a distinct pledge and a large promise, but there is an equally clear condition attached to His words. Christ undertakes to do His part, if we do ours. The very wording of the promise cautions us that we must be sure that Christ, Whose representatives we are, would Himself have offered our petition if He had been in our place offering our own prayer for us. As our Head, He now presents to God the prayers of His people and intercedes for them, and these prayers must be in harmony with His character and His work. "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Now, what is the natural conclusion to be drawn from all this? What answer does it give us to our question, "For what may we pray?" It brings us back to the very point from which we started. Christ Himself expressly tells us, "My meat is to do the Will of My Father." And what is that Heavenly Father's Will? What is God's eternal purpose? The establishment of His Kingdom of Love on earth. It was, as we have so often stated, to build this Kingdom that Christ laboured all along. "For this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world."

Therefore, if we pray in Christ's Name, as His representatives, we must pray in His Spirit, animated by the motives that prompted His own prayers, aspiring to be fellow-workers together with God in His eternal purpose of Love, bending our will loyally to His Will, so alone shall we reflect in ourselves the character of Christ, pray in His Name.

With the spirit of such prayers as Christ contemplates, all personal selfishness, all narrowness which cannot realize intelligent, loving, enthusiastic co-operation with God's great plan beyond self, or family, or country, or even beyond the Catholic Church, is incompatible. It inspires a constancy of purpose and a purity of will which is the life of true or reasonable prayer, the death of selfish and unreasonable prayer.

We have already hinted that even the words, "Ask, and ye shall have," are qualified in the same manner. They were addressed by Christ to disciples who had forsaken all, taken up their cross, and followed Him. To the best of their ability they were loyally and faithfully co-operating with their Divine Master in His work and purpose of love. And only in so far as we are equally in touch with our Lord do the words of His promise to them apply to us.

From their own words, we can see how fully the Apostles themselves realized the one condition attached to these great promises. "*Whatever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight*" (1 S. John iii. 22). "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, *if we ask anything according to His Will, He heareth us*" (1 S. John v. 14).

Clearly, then, Christ's large promises of answer to prayer are addressed and limited to God's children *as God's children*, to Christ's disciples in so far as they *are* Christ's disciples. To claim the promises at all, we must be fellow-workers together with God in His eternal purpose. Then, and only then, are our prayers a power with God, Who is saving man through man, and has graciously, though wondrously, "attached the development of His Kingdom, by a mysterious Providence, to our prayers" (R. M. Benson).

## CHAPTER IV. PART I.

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### PRAYER-DIFFICULTIES (THEOLOGICAL).

#### *Argument.*

FOUR theological prayer-difficulties stated.

A. "*To pray as Christ would have prayed, had He been in our place, is a moral impossibility.*" But in prayer God's Holy Spirit prompts us, so that we do pray according to the Will of God (Rom. viii. 26). Human experience daily proves how immensely one human spirit influences another; so it is with the influence of God's Holy Spirit on ours. *If we will*, the Holy Spirit "dwells in us," and we are "in the Spirit" ourselves, so that we are one with Christ, and this prayer-difficulty vanishes.

B. "*Prayer according to God's Will is a waste of breath; God's Will is sure to be done, whether we pray or not.*" Therefore many maintain that the only true effect of prayer is subjective, i.e. it brings the mind of him who prays into harmony with God; but, in other respects, the objective result of prayer is *nil*. But human experience and the Bible-promises prove that this is *not* all the efficacy of prayer. The Word of God attaches prayer as a *condition* to the bestowal of many of His blessings. Why even God cannot dispense with our human prayers, so long as we remain free moral agents.

C. "*It is right to pray for spiritual gifts; but it is more than open to question whether material petitions are according to the Will of God.*" This is the modern scientific objection to prayer which will be examined in Part II. Here it is only suggested that such an objection is unphilosophical and un-Christian. Unphilosophical, because it draws an artificial line between the spiritual and natural realm of Law. Un-Christian, because our Lord urges us to pray for material blessings. Christ cuts across the imaginary distinction between the spiritual and the natural, and shows that it is as easy for God to cure the body of a fever, as to cure the soul of sin, e.g. in the case of the man sick of the palsy. "Those were days of miracles," men say. What are miracles? A miracle produces, through the action of ordinary causes, results which seem to us extraordinary because they are a variation of the accustomed order of things.—Material prayers which *are* wrong: prayers wherein we pray to be delivered from the physical results of our own ignorance or folly. Here Laws of Nature *are* declarations of God's Will, and we dare not ask Him to interfere with their operation.

D. (see next chapter).



## CHAPTER IV. PART I.

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### PRAYER - DIFFICULTIES (THEOLOGICAL).

WHEN we have reached this point, the natural objection may plausibly be urged that such a view of prayer robs it of much of its value, for the following reasons :—

(1) It is morally impossible for an ordinary man to be in such close touch with Christ as to think as He thinks, act as He acts, will as He wills. Therefore, ordinary men can never pray aright.

(2) If we only receive answers to our prayers in so far as they are in perfect harmony with God's Will, why need we pray at all? What are we the better for asking Him to do His Will, when that Will is sure to be done whether we ask or whether we do not?

(3) We know that spiritual graces are essentially good in themselves, and, therefore, in harmony with God's Will, so we shall continue to pray for these. But we can never be sure that our petitions for temporal blessings are good, therefore we must now discontinue them.

(4) If prayer is to be confined to true and sincere Christians, then no "publicans and sinners" need pray, for they are not praying in Christ's Name, and, therefore, their prayers will not be heard.

This is a heavy indictment, and we must meet it fairly and squarely. To fear investigation even in matters of faith, to conceal difficulties, to slur over inconsistencies, or to overstate convictions are faults which darken and degrade the soul. We should be deeply grateful to critics when they subject our theories to a fierce search-light to see if our hypothesis covers all the facts or is itself borne out by facts. It forces us to stop and think; it constrains us to test and overhaul carefully the bases of our knowledge and, like the Bereans, "search the Scriptures, whether these things are so." It is but reasonable that we should "always be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us."

Let us consider these four objections in their order :—

#### A.

(1) "It is morally impossible for any ordinary man to be in such close touch with Christ as to think, act and will as He does. Therefore, ordinary men cannot pray aright."

In His Holy Word, God Himself has anticipated this difficulty, and supplied the answer to it. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered . . . and maketh

intercession for the saints according to the Will of God " (Rom. viii. 26, 27).

Let us try to put this in simpler language. In each one of us there is a divine germ which is closely akin to God. This is our true self. In prayer it is this child-soul that thirsts for reunion with the Divine Source, the Father-Soul, from which it sprang. God is a Spirit, so are we.

Now if there is one thing more marvellous than another in our human experience, it is the strange, weird magnetic influence which brain exercises upon brain, heart on heart, spirit on spirit in our common human intercourse. In some inexplicable way, the doors of our soul are open to others, and theirs to us. Thoughts and feelings come into our minds from fellow-spirits through avenues which we never consciously left open, and thoughts go out of our minds to others unconsciously in a way which is inexplicable in our eyes. No one can detach himself from this connection. From every single one of us there emanates and radiates this influence by which we impress ourselves on others and diffuse our own personality throughout the world, an influence which proceeds from the very heart of our character and infects all with whom we come into contact. Well says Emerson, "Character teaches over our head." Whoever comes near us is infected by us, for it is as impossible for character not to influence others as for a flame to withhold its light, a rose its perfume, fire its heat. We can no more escape from

it than from the gravitation of the earth. So it is that the mere silent presence of one man blights our spirits like an east wind, while another cheers us like a ray of sunshine,—to know this man as a friend is a liberal education, while association with that other proves our curse. “There are natures in which, if they love us, we are conscious of having a sort of baptism and consecration” (G. Eliot). Even a child can wield this inspiring influence. “Here lies a little girl of whom her playmates said, it was so much easier to be good when she was with us.” Just as it was said of Napoleon that the magnetic power of his personality was so intense, that his mere presence on the battle-field was worth an additional 15,000 troops.

If this is true—and who dare deny it?—if it is a fact that “there are no bounds to the help which spirit can give to spirit in the intercourse of a noble life” (Archbp. Temple), then, what bounds dare we set to the influence of God’s Holy Spirit upon our spirit which has come forth directly from His?

True, God respects our freedom too much to force our wills even for our own best good. As our loving All-wise Father, He does not compel us to do right, He can only make us good by winning us of our own accord to do that which is right, and so form the character which He approves. But the one way in which even a wise earthly father trains his child to be good, is by bringing good influences persua-

sively to bear upon him, placing him in as good and healthy a moral atmosphere as he can. And thus God acts, and must act with us if He is our Father. He will not lay His finger upon our wills; but as friend ennobles friend, as our friend's good character enters into our very soul through avenues we wot not of; even so, God's Spirit touches the springs of our spirit and transfigures our very nature so that, loving Him, we grow like Him. In the warmth and light of His Presence our understanding is enlightened, our imagination spiritualized, our best feelings are kindled, our wills purified. And when we are steeped in this Divine Spirit, conscious of our Father's intense love, His belief and trust in us, we are conscious too of a new birth, baptism, and consecration. He unveils the beauties of holiness to us, and the miseries and degradations of sin, and our sins become in our eyes a sacrilege, wounding our loving Father's heart. At such moments God shows us what His will is, shows us that in His unchanging love He is seeking our best-welfare, and invites and persuades us to join Him in seeking it, and through it our fellow-man's.

This is the Holy Ghost, the Comforter which proceeds from God and His Christ, the Spirit of purity and love and truth which guides into all truth.

He has been with us from the beginning, ever since God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, so that he became a living soul (Gen. ii. 7). There has ever been a unique fellowship of kindred

Spirit with kindred spirit in spite of man's wilful flying in the face of God. More and more, as one generation succeeded another, was this fellowship of God with man realized by both Jew and Gentile. "Warriors and poets, prophets and priests, all found their inspiration in this Holy Spirit of God as the living motive power animating their words and deeds." "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (S. James i. 17).

At all times man has instinctively felt this relationship between God and man. Thinking men always and everywhere have yearned intensely to realize this kinship, but they had no absolute guarantee of it till Christ historically realized and revealed it in Himself. In the Incarnation at last, in the fulness of time, the Father of man satisfies the instinct He has Himself implanted, and comes forth from Infinity to respond to the universal demands of the race.

From that day forth there has been established in the human consciousness a relationship so close between God and man that it can only be conveyed in terms expressive of the most intimate kinship and communion. Not only can it be asserted that God's Spirit "dwells in man," but man is "in the Spirit." What was the fulness of God in Christ is in us in the germ. Through the Holy Spirit in us we are literally one with God and with Christ, and, if we will, this enabling Spirit is the channel through

which we can draw without measure upon God's goodness and strength and make it our very own.

All that Christ promised respecting this Holy Spirit is ours now, if we will. "I will not leave you comfortless: I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth. At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you. He will guide you into all truth. He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine, and show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine; therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you. He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

This, then, is the Holy Spirit Who "when we know not what to pray for as we ought, helpeth our infirmities, and Itself maketh intercession for us *according to the Will of God.*" S. Paul tells us that this Holy Spirit not only assures us that we are really and truly sons of God, so that we can now come confidently to Him as our loving Father; but also that this indwelling Spirit reveals to us the Will of God, so that we acutely feel earth's sorrow, and long and are able to do our share as fellow-workers together with God in His eternal purpose of Love. "The whole creation groaneth until now, and travaileth in pain. And not only so, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves," i.e. at earth's sorrows, longing to mend them.

Well, then, when God's Spirit so clearly shows us the Will of God for the deliverance of ourselves, of our homes, of our fellow-men from all form of evil, let us not "Quench the Holy Spirit." When the story of the sin and sorrow of humanity is told us thus clearly by God, let us not close our ears and refuse to share in the pain of others, or to bear their burdens. This is to grieve the Spirit indeed. We ought to hear, we ought to know, we ought to heal the sob, and sigh, and agony of the world. When we feel that, then, through the Spirit helping our infirmities, we shall truly and verily pray according to the Will of God. We shall do more, out of such prayer will come the toil on our own part which will help to bring in the Kingdom of God.

### B.

(2) "If we receive answers to prayer only in so far as our prayers are in perfect harmony with God's Will, why need we pray at all? What are we the better for asking Him to do His Will, when that Will is sure to be done whether we ask or whether we do not?"

The objection is so natural and takes so many forms that, even though we have answered it to ourselves a thousand times, it is ever starting up in our hearts as strong as ever, and is almost ready to deny that it has ever been answered at all.

Indeed, it voices a view of prayer which has at all times appealed to spiritually-minded men. If



God is, as we know He is, our All-loving, All-wise, Almighty Father, He knows beforehand all that we His frail and ignorant creatures and children need, far better than we do. "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" says Christ, "for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." He does not need to be informed of our needs: and since He is a good Father Who cares for His children, He does not require to be coaxed or solicited to supply our wants.

Besides, God is not a man that He should change His mind. He already knows beforehand what He means to do, and no prayers on our part will make Him alter His purpose. If our prayers are according to His Will, they are just asking for what He was going to do all along: if they are not in harmony with His Will, we are simply wasting our breath, for our petitions are worse than useless. Therefore, in either case our prayers are futile. Such prayers are a misunderstanding of Providence, looking at God from a wrong standpoint, based on a radically wrong principle.

Is prayer, then, altogether a mistake? Not at all, reply these critics: the true object of prayer is the ennobling effect it undoubtedly has on the man who prays. The issue of our requests, their being granted or denied, is of slight consequence, a minor consideration. The one thing which alone matters is

the immense influence for good this intercourse with God has upon our soul and character. No doubt the Divine Will will be accomplished whether with our prayers or without them. But it will make all the difference in the world,—at least to you who pray,—to say from your heart of hearts, “Father, Thy Will, not mine, be done.” It is to consent to that Will of God, to adopt it, to make it your very own; and can anything uplift and ennoble you more than that?

The true value of prayer, they insist, resides in the fact that it is a speaking to God, and the oftener we come thus into His immediate Presence the better, though the objective results of prayer are *nil*. Even in our purely human friendships, we grow more and more like those with whom we associate, we unconsciously copy those friends whom we look up to and love. The attachment we form to noble souls is beyond all wealth, honour or even health. A true friend brings out the best that is in us. “The theatre of all my actions is fallen,” said a great man of old on the death of his best friend, and “fortunate are they who get a theatre where their audience demands their very best” (G. Eliot).—So it is with the soul, when dealing with the Friend of friends, our Father Which is in Heaven. The more we are in His inspiring Presence, seeking His Face and communing with Him in prayer, the more surely will godly graces spring up within us and bear fruit in our lives. How beautifully this is

expressed in the Bible-story of Moses. "And it came to pass when Moses came down from Mount Sinai where he had seen God face to face, the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone, *but Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with God.*"

So with us, each time we consciously and truly talk with God in prayer, our faces shine with their best and purest light. The reflection of God is mirrored in us, we are bathed in the fountains of Divine Glory.

We have attempted to state the objection as strongly and candidly as we can. But is this all the value, all the use, all the efficacy of prayer? Do not the instinct of prayer, the universal experience of the saints of God in all ages, above all, do not the large promises of answer to prayer made to us by Christ point to very much more than this? Would most men continue to pray if they supposed that the only blessing they were to derive from prayer was that subjective good we have just described?

This is very far from being the answer to the question which God Himself gives us in His own Word. Unless we misread our Bible altogether, God there tells us that we must ask, or we shall not receive. Prayer on our part is the condition imposed by God in connection with the bestowal of His blessings. With every promise there is the implied condition, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them."

This is what Archbishop Benson means by, "What in God is Divine purpose, in us is prayer, and again in Him is fulfilment," and R. M. Benson, "God has attached the development of His glory by a mysterious Providence to our prayers."

And, in a way, we can understand why it is so. A few pages back, we said that our All-Wise loving Father is ever seeking our welfare, but He respects our freedom too much to secure even our welfare apart from our own will and our own actions. He has chosen to surround Himself with children possessed of intelligence, free moral agents, and even He cannot make us good by mere mechanical or even moral pressure. Were He to do so, the goodness, such as it was, would be His not ours. He persuasively brings to bear all the good influences He possibly can upon us His children, by communicating His own Holy Spirit to us. But it rests absolutely with us to welcome or quench this Holy Spirit in our hearts.

God makes this very clear in His own Word. "I stand at the door, and knock." We ourselves must open the heart-door, for God will not enter where He is not a welcome guest.

If, then, God will only win us by winning us over to Himself of our own freewill and accord: if He will not accomplish His own eternal purpose, our welfare and the welfare of the human race which He is ever seeking, till He can persuade us to respond to His invitation to join Him of our own

freewill in seeking this welfare,—what then? Strong as the statement may sound, it is true all the same,—God cannot dispense with our prayers: they form one of the strongest links in the chain of love by which He is drawing mankind to Himself. Our prayers are our own personal appeal to the Giver of all good gifts to give us the help, the strength, the will, the heart we need to secure our welfare—the welfare He Himself is seeking but which He will not force upon us. Our prayers are the consent on our part without which He will not interfere with us.

Very far from our prayers according to God's Will being unnecessary, God Himself cannot do without them. Apart from our human prayers, God Himself is reluctant to do what He means to do. He means man's salvation to be worked out by man himself, and our prayers according to His Will are the most potent factor in His eternal purpose, the establishment of His Kingdom here on earth.

### C.

(3) "We know that spiritual graces are essentially good in themselves, and, therefore, in harmony with God's Will, so we shall continue to pray for these. But we can never be sure that our petitions for material blessings are good, therefore we must now discontinue them."

This objection leaves the efficacy of prayer un-

touched when its object is a spiritual blessing ; it only seeks to exclude the physical world from the scope of prayer. The advocates of this view allow man to ask that his faith may be strengthened, or that his heart may be purified, but they deny the propriety of prayer for temporal blessings ; they deny, for example, that it is right to pray for restoration of health, the arrest of famine or pestilence, for rain or fine weather, and so forth.

But, surely, this distinction is unphilosophical, for it rests on the assumption that the material world is a closed circle, where everything is so unalterably fixed according to laws of Nature laid down by God Himself, that even He is the slave of His own laws, and cannot possibly interfere with them : whereas the spiritual world is not thus subject to law but admits of God's constant interference. But why make this distinction ? For the matter of that, our character is, in precisely the same way, determined for us by laws, as every student of psychology knows. If, then, it is an objection to prayer for temporal blessings, that, in offering them, we are asking God to perform a miracle, it is equally an objection to prayer for spiritual blessings. You ask Him to perform as real a miracle, when you ask God to cure your soul of sin, as you do when you ask Him to cure your body of a fever. This distinction between the material and spiritual spheres is illogical.

The objection to prayer for material blessings is one which takes many forms. The great modern

argument against prayer for material benefits is this:—In God's world we everywhere find the reign of law. God rules the universe and the affairs of men in certain fixed and invariable ways, according to certain well-established Laws of Nature. How, then, can we hope or wish that He should violate these laws, which ensure the general welfare; that He should work a special miracle to show favour to this man or that, to supply his want or gratify his desire?

The scientific idea of law, say these modern teachers, renders these material prayers absurd. "We know that a shower is the product of atmospheric laws, which make a shower, under certain circumstances, inevitable. We know that health and disease are the natural results of physiological laws, which absolutely determine that one man shall live and another die." Therefore, material prayers belong to the days when the idea of Law had not yet dawned upon man's intellect, when temporal blessings were thought to depend upon the caprice of God. Now we know that the whole material world is ruled by God according to fixed and unchangeable laws. To pray God to alter, suspend, violate these Laws is to pray against God Himself, to imply that His methods are not "very good," to suggest that man can advise God how to make them better.

On the purely scientific side of this question more will be said hereafter. Here we are addressing believers who are ready to accept the Bible's verdict

as final, and we must confine ourselves to its declarations on the subject.

We have already said that "in Christ's Name" we can pray for all that He Himself prayed for, anything which He Himself would ask were He in our place and offering our prayers for us.

Now, not only does He Himself distinctly urge us to pray for temporal blessings: "Give us this day our daily bread," but He also enjoins us to include time and weather in our petitions. "Pray ye that your flight be not in winter" (S. Mark xiii. 18), He says to His disciples with reference to the dark days coming with the destruction of Jerusalem. And when His disciples pray for fair weather in time of storm, Christ at once hears and answers their prayer (S. Matth. viii. 26).

Christ once and for all cuts across the imaginary distinction between spiritual and material blessings. He emphatically proves that it is as easy for God to cure the body of disease, as to cure the soul of sin, "Whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and walk?" and, there and then, Christ bestowed both the one and the other on the man sick of the palsy.

In His lifetime, Christ fed the hungry, healed the sick, stilled the storm, and shall we say it is wrong now to ask Him, in His Name, to do for us what He was so ready to do then?

"Those were days of miracles," men say. What is a miracle? If God is actually dwelling in His



universe as well as guiding it, if all that *is* is an expression of the Divine Intelligence<sup>a</sup>, then, "to me there is nothing but miracle" (Walt Whitman). In the Galilee-storm, God was both the storm and the queller of it. Was it a miracle? Do I work a miracle if, after placing an irritant on an ailing body for medical purposes, afterwards, when the pain and distress is gone, I arise and soothe the irritated surface with some balm, and there is a great calm? I am the agent in both cases, with a purpose in both, but I have not worked a miracle. Jesus, as God, had all the power of the Divine Intelligence embodied in Him. He could and did work miracles, i.e. produce, through the operation of ordinary causes, results which to us seem extraordinary, because they are a variation of the order of things to which we are accustomed. *But Christ seldom and almost unwillingly worked such miracles*<sup>b</sup>. Prof. Huxley warned men to be cautious in their attacks on miracles. These are his words :

<sup>a</sup> "All the higher philosophy, from Aristotle onwards, has maintained that the universe is ultimately spiritual, and that matter, as we call it, is a manifestation and an instrument of the spirit" (Illingworth). Cf. "All that *is* is God's thought in process of transmutation into matter."

<sup>b</sup> This may seem too sweeping a statement. Christ was always glad to perform works of mercy, but He steadily refused to make miracles the test of His claims, His credentials. This was precisely one of the temptations which He had faced and conquered in the wilderness. If we crave for a "sign," the crowning miracle of Christianity is the Incarnation, and all other miracles flow naturally from that.

"A man with absolute knowledge of every secret and molecular arrangement of Nature could control, subordinate, transfigure, retard, accelerate Nature's ordinary processes and do all Jesus did." We believe that Jesus, as God, had this absolute knowledge, and what God did then for men, He is ready to do now in answer to prayer.

BUT, having said this, we must protest with all our might against some of the absurd misconceptions of prayer prevalent nowadays. Men constantly and consciously break God's revealed laws, laws which reward and punish of themselves, and then when they reap the natural fruits of the seeds they have sown, they fly to God for deliverance in prayer and insist on being heard.

As a general rule, we may take it that a Law of Nature, a known law of the physical world, is a declaration of the Will of God. There are, for instance, the well-known laws of health. We have no patience with those people who, through their own recklessness, carelessness, excess, uncleanness, selfish lives, ruin their health and character, let their bodily physique run to rack and ruin, rear puny children who naturally take after them,—then look up languidly to Heaven, with a sigh of resignation to the Will of God, and pray to be delivered from their distress. If we prepare a dish of food carelessly, we do not expect God to make it palatable: neither need we expect Providence to interfere miraculously on our behalf if,

through years of folly, we misguide our own life, and sow the seeds of physical or moral disease.

We may and should pray to be delivered from evil, physical, moral and spiritual, but only on condition that we do not wilfully run into it ourselves. We may and should pray for our children, but only on condition that we ourselves do our utmost to train them up in the right way. God only helps those who help themselves, and we are not doing that when we fly in the face of those revealed physical laws which are a declaration of His Will.

This is one condition which God has attached to His promise of answers to prayer for temporal blessings, and here is another: "Is our prayer consistent not only with our own best welfare, but with God's eternal purpose, the well-being of the world at large?" Wherever we turn, this central idea ever meets us, and we are bound ever to keep it before our eyes, for it is the one supreme purpose of God, as revealed to us by His Son. It is only in the light of this one fundamental truth that we can reach a consistent and rational view of the evolution of the human race, with a loving Providence behind it all the while as its driving-power, and we ourselves must fall into line with this Divine purpose, or we are retarding it instead of being fellow-workers together with God.

Therefore, each time we pray for a material blessing, be it health, fine weather or what it may, we must remember that we are not the best judges

of what is consistent not only with our own, but mankind's best good.

S. Paul prayed thrice for the removal of a bodily infirmity. His prayer was earnest, trusting and sincere, but it was not granted in the way he asked. God showed him that it was denied only because it was better for himself and others that his infirmity should remain. This very infirmity, which he so deprecated, was calculated to strengthen his own character, and so make him a better fellow-worker with God.

One far greater than S. Paul, on the eve of His crucifixion, prayed "Father, if it be possible, let this Cup pass from Me." We know that Christ had to drink that bitter Cup, thus alone could His own complete victory and God's eternal purpose be achieved.

So, if we are wise, when we pray,—especially when we pray for temporal blessings, where our judgment is specially likely to be narrow and warped,—we shall also add to our "Father, if it be possible," Christ's own words, "nevertheless, Thy Will, not mine, be done."

With this stipulation, we may and we should pray for temporal blessings. Do not let us listen to the plausible argument that God and His Universe are too great for Him to be able to attend to our trivial personal needs.

The Bible only endorses the verdict of reason

when it assures us that "the very hairs of our head are all numbered." Even in our human experience, the best and greatest are they who act not only with a wide grasp but also with a clear insight into details. So we honour God most when we look up to Him as the Ruler of the Universe, Who, in the absolute perfection of His knowledge "knows all the stars by name," yet knows and loves each one of us as if we were the sole object of His care.

"In everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God," says the Bible; and the true Christian will call upon Him not only for spiritual but for temporal blessings as well, confident that, if it is according to God's Will, He will grant the request, even if it needs what we call a miracle to effect that result.

"I verily believe," writes Canon Liddon, "that God is Omnipotent, and can control at Will the laws He Himself has made. I believe He is a Moral Being, and that He is likely so to control them, supposing moral interests affecting mankind at large to be at stake. It would be shocking to pray for or against an eclipse,—to state a very extreme case,—only in order to gratify the curiosity of a scientific association. Nay the bodily distress of millions of human beings might perhaps be no sufficient reason for asking God to work so complex and gigantic a miracle as is here in question. But

let us suppose an eclipse to provoke some outbursts of crime on a large scale, which could not be counteracted by any known human agency. In that case prayer against an eclipse would at least be rational and reverent. Rational, because God might arrest eclipses, and a great deal else, if He willed to do so: and reverent, because God is pre-eminently a Moral Being, and such a prayer would be an acknowledgment of His Goodness. Of course, He might not answer such a prayer under any circumstances. But it is inconceivable that, being what He is, He should be angry with His suppliant.

“God is not merely a Force or an Intellect, but a Father. We must indeed watch, anxiously and reverently, His ways of working in Nature as elsewhere. We may not lightly ask Him to reverse what we believe to be His rules of working. We dare not ask Him to vary capriciously His action in the physical world, or at once to take our judgment of the needs of the moral world for granted. . . . But we will not, on the other hand, treat the Living God as a helpless Fate.”

There is one more theological difficulty, but we must give it a chapter to itself.

## CHAPTER IV. PART II.

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### PRAYER - DIFFICULTIES (THEOLOGICAL), CONTINUED.

#### *Argument.*

*"Prayer 'in Christ's Name' excludes sinners, non-Christians, heathen, however good they may be, from effectual prayer."* This must be a leaden arbitrary canon, for it offends God and man, and is diametrically contra-

dictory to Christ's teaching in the parables of the Prodigal Son and the Publican's Prayer. These parables tell us that we are, even at our worst, loved sons of God, *not* "children of wrath," repulsive by nature to an angry affronted God. They also correct our wrong attitude towards those whom we regard as outside the pale of God's fold, whether as heretics or heathen, because their creed is not ours.

Credo essential to all true religion. All belief *in* God, all heart-convictions pre-suppose a creed, a confession of faith. Each time we call God "Father," or Christ "Son of God," we commit ourselves to a creed. A Faith without a creed is a moral impossibility.

But we can be orthodox overmuch, even as we may be "righteous overmuch," and make our creed the test of a man's acceptance with God. God's test is far rather rightness of character than rightness of belief (S. Matth. xxv. 35 sqq.). He who serves man best, serves God best.

If so, then many Agnostics,—i.e. honest seekers after Truth, whose hearts are true and their lives right, though their eyes are still holden and they see not God,—are very near to the Kingdom of God. Is not such a man's life a prayer, though his lips may never pray? Similarly, does not our Lord's commendation of the Roman centurion, of the Syro-Phenician woman, as well as His express statement that many heathen shall enter God's Kingdom while the so-called orthodox remain outside it, prove that heathen-prayers are heard of God? S. Paul and Malachi prove it too.

Therefore, sinners, Agnostics, heathen can and do pray effectually to God, because every man has within him a soul directly sprung from God, his Father; a soul which instinctively thirsts after God. But there *is* a sense in which sinners cannot pray.



## CHAPTER IV. PART II.

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### PRAYER-DIFFICULTIES (THEOLOGICAL), *continued.*

*[In Part I. of this chapter we have tried to meet three of the prayer-difficulties, but there is still a fourth religious objection, which opens out such a wide field that we have thought it advisable to devote a whole chapter to its consideration.]*

*The very wording of this prayer-difficulty compels us to define the meaning of some of its essential terms: and this, in its turn, leads us into what many of our readers will call a long, unnecessary (and perhaps offensive) digression. We crave their patience and forbearance. We have carefully weighed our words, and hope that they will be found to have a direct bearing on the question at issue.]*

#### D.

(4) “**I**F effectual prayer is confined to those who pray ‘in Christ’s Name’ i.e. if it is limited to God’s children, *as God’s true children*, to Christ’s disciples, *in so far as they are Christ’s disciples*, then no ‘publicans and sinners’ need pray, for they are not praying ‘in Christ’s Name,’ and, therefore, their prayers will not be heard.”

In plain words, our definition of prayer seems to imply, if we drive our premises to their logical conclusion, that prayer “in Christ’s Name,” by its very connotation, excludes not only the prayers of “publicans and sinners,” but also all non-Christian

petitions. In that case there would be no virtue, no efficacy, in the "heart's desire, uttered or unexpressed," of those many good men amongst us "whose life is in the right," but who are not strictly religious in the sense in which we commonly understand religion; there would be no efficacy, either, in the prayers of the countless multitudes who are accounted as heathen.

On the face of it, such a limitation of the efficacy of prayer is clearly an arbitrary canon, a leaden rule; it proves too much. Such a line of demarcation offends our common-sense, our common humanity, our common experience. It contradicts the very essence of the teaching of Christ and the Word of God.

It you reduce prayer in Christ's Name to such narrow limits, what meaning can we attach to Christ's beautiful word-pictures of the Prodigal Son and the praying Publican? The whole purport of the story of that one prayer of man commended by our Lord: "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner," and of that other parable of the Prodigal Son, is to prove that God gladly hears and instantly answers the heart's desire, uttered or unexpressed, of the most wilful and wayward of His beloved children.

Indeed, the story of the Prodigal Son seems to show that God, if such a thing is possible, is thinking even more of the son who has gone utterly to the bad than of his brother who is already in His Father's home. Christ's word-picture paints the

prodigal as almost the more human and lovable of the two. The elder brother maintains such a petulant, self-satisfied, superior attitude of surly aloofness ; he is so unbrotherly, so ungenerous. His poverty of affection, his cold, selfish, offensive attitude of insistence on his legal rights stand out in such marked contrast with his affectionate father's warmth of welcome, and the prodigal's mute appeal which draws our very heart out towards him.

In every parable of our Lord, there is a surface and an inner meaning ; so it is here. This word-picture gives us a comforting revelation of the boundless love, the measureless forgiveness of our Father.

“ Kind hearts are here, but yet the tenderest one  
Has limits to his mercy, God has none.  
And man's forgiveness may be true and sweet,  
But yet he *stoops* to give it. More complete  
Is love that lays forgiveness at thy feet  
And pleads with thee to take it. Only Heaven  
Means ‘crowned,’ not vanquished, when it says ‘forgive.’ ”

This parable tells us, too, that we are real sons of God by birth as His Spirit-children, sons who are sadly missed when they are away from home, sons whom our Father's heart yearns for with a love that cannot rest till it has sought them out and found them. And we want this divine truth brought home to our inmost souls even now, when our traditional theology, our clumsy Deistic conception of

God still insists so strongly on the unutterable corruption of man with his original sinfulness, and makes him in his natural state an object of repulsion to an angry affronted God Who needs to be appeased.

Inherited tendencies to unregulated sinful desires there undoubtedly are in us, but "children of wrath" in God's eyes we certainly are not, in the sense ordinarily attributed to this expression. "Children of wrath" simply means "wrathful men," men who give way to wrath, hatred, jealousy, strife, slander and sulkiness; just as "sons of disobedience" means disobedient men. S. Paul's simple and innocent phrase was never intended to cover the dreadful dogmas that have been fathered upon it. "Ye are the sons of God" your loving Father, affirms Christ. Nay, say the theologians, ye are by nature the "children of wrath." Christ's story of the Prodigal Son flatly contradicts man's view.

But over and above God's boundless unchangeable love for us His sons, sons beloved even when we are at our very worst, the parable of the Prodigal Son corrects our wrong attitude towards those whom we regard as outside the pale of God's fold, those whom we label as heterodox or absolutely irreligious because they do not see eye to eye with us in matters of faith. "Those who know not the law are accursed," said the Jewish religious teachers. In the same spirit, we are too apt to assert even now, "Whoso does not believe thus and thus about God and His Christ shall perish everlastingly." Law or dogma rigidly applied

makes no allowance for a man's temperament, motive or environment. Love points out a better way, and, in showing mercy, is sensitive to the finest shades of justice, for the story of the Prodigal Son shows us that mercy is justice perfectly applied.

It has been truly said, "Limiting the universal grace of God to one nation was Israel's sin, and the Gospel of Jesus broke forth, perforce, from these narrow limits. Limiting the free grace of God to one visible Church was the sin of Rome, and Protestantism came forth from the mediæval cloisters to breathe in a freer spiritual atmosphere. Limiting the free grace of God to the adherents of a certain 'confession of faith' or creed has always been the menacing evil of Protestantism. Free, pure, spiritual religion must break forth from its present bondage to the formulas of beliefs, if a living trust in a loving Father is the sole deliverance of the soul."

We do not wish to be misunderstood. In a sense this quotation is quite true, but it is an exaggerated truth, a truth "run to death." It is possible to give disproportionate attention to correctness of belief: to set creeds in such relief that they hold an altogether false place: to be orthodox overmuch. There are men who are so jealous for orthodoxy that they write over every lintel, "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting."

But creeds, say what we will, are an essential of all true and genuine heartfelt religion. If we are to trust in God and His Christ at all, to believe *in*

them, we must know something, at least, of what we mean by God, and why we identify Christ with God. We must be always ready and able to give ourselves and others "an answer, a reason of the hope that is in us." How can a man trustingly look up to God, and pray, if He knows Him not?

This knowledge of God is not of a purely intellectual character, it is far rather inward, personal, spiritual, an instinct and conviction of the heart. Therefore Christ Himself naturally and necessarily insisted on it. What else is the meaning of His vital question to S. Peter: "And Whom say ye that I am?" Why did Christ straightway pronounce such an emphatic blessing on S. Peter's confession of faith, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," if a confession of faith is as valueless as some people fancy? For, if words mean anything, S. Peter's answer is nothing if not a creed.

Christ, when on earth, demanded of those who would enter the Kingdom of God, as His conscious and accredited disciples, the acknowledgment of certain clearly defined personal claims on His part. To go no further than S. Mark's Gospel, the authenticity of which is universally admitted even by the most advanced critics, we find, as the author of *Ecce Homo* has shown, that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah (viii. 29; ix. 41; xii. 6; xiv. 62). He speaks with an inexpressible dignity and authority which no prophet ever assumes, and which none but His Divine claims can justify (ii. 28; x. 4; cf.

S. Matth. v. 27 sqq.). He claims the power to forgive sins (ii. 10). Why were these claims made, if it is quite immaterial whether we accept them or not? So, precisely, with Christ's claims to be God Incarnate, born into the world of a woman, in the likeness of sinful man, yet the express image of God. Either we endorse His credentials or we do not. If we do, what is this but a confession of faith or a creed?

We cannot even speak of God as "Father," or of Christ as "Lord," "Son of God," "Saviour," without by that very act committing ourselves to a creed, and we verily believe that of such heartfelt "confessions of faith" or spiritual, inward, personal convictions, Christ says now as of old: "Blessed art thou, for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto thee, but My Father Which is in Heaven."

As the Bishop of Southwark ably puts it: "We are more sure of the Unity of God and Man in Jesus than we are of the definition or description by which the Creed attempts to explain the Mystery: just as we are more sure of the character and personality of Jesus than we are of the complete authenticity of the Gospel records of Him. But this will not prevent us from recognizing that the Gospels are to be revered as the Spirit-fashioned shrine of the life and power of Christ, containing sufficiently what it is for us to know about Him; just as we see no prospect of any better expression superseding the Creed in which the Holy Spirit taught the early

Church explicitly to embody the inner meaning of its faith in Him."

This we fully and unconditionally endorse, and to our mind the Nicene Creed is little short of inspired. At any rate, every conscious Christian is bound to adopt a clearly-defined attitude in his acknowledgment or rejection of Christ's claims and his own conception of God. A man's moral responsibility in this matter is immense. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." A creed of some definite sort we must all have, now that the true light has come into the world. "This is their condemnation," says Christ, "that light is come into the world," and some men with the full light pouring in upon their hearts, will have none of it. Undoubtedly it is "with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness," but S. Paul also takes care to add, "and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

But, having said this, we must protest with all our might against the modern tendency to give disproportionate attention to correctness of belief, to make our creed the universal canon of orthodoxy, the test of a man's acceptance with God. It is our bounden duty to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the Saints," but let us first be positively certain that our statement of it is Christ's own statement as He delivered it. "Conventional Theology is ever covering God's Door with cobwebs, and obscuring God's clear light, so that God has ever



to be re-revealed"; and do let us take care in our insistence, for example, on the frequent public use of the Athanasian Creed, that we are not "binding heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and laying them on men's shoulders." It is a man's own honest convictions that God requires of him, not the opinions he may have borrowed from others. He does not want mere parrot-like repetitions of other men's sayings, He asks us to let down our nets of thought into deep and true principles, to get at the heart of the matter for ourselves. And this individualizing of personal religion is one of the healthiest signs of our day. "Men's minds are more and more set towards the spiritual, even when they are set away from Christianity" (Lambeth Conference, 1908). God's light has grown so much clearer, man's spiritual ideas and needs have so gained in height and depth and breadth, the Holy Spirit has so quickened the hearts even of merely professing Christians that they will not any longer endorse what they do not fully believe. It is better thus. In spite of its many false applications, there is truth in the now trite words of Tennyson: "there lives more truth in honest doubt than in half the creeds."

And does not Christ tell us in S. Matth. xxv., as we have said over and over again, that, on the great Day when each one of us gives an account of our stewardship, the test He will apply to our life-work will be not our orthodoxy but our service to our fellow-men? Throughout the Bible it is by this one

standard that God tests the value of our religion. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows and to keep himself unspotted from the world." "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (cf. Is. lviii.).

May we not also look at the "creed-fetish" of the present day in another way? Is it not true that although we say the self-same words: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth," and utter them just as our forefathers have repeated these identical words for the last fifteen hundred years and more,—yet the Holy Spirit of God has so been at work upon man's heart and brain during all that time, has so quickened and enlightened our hearts, that the meaning of these words we recite in the Creed, identical as they may sound, has totally altered? Our knowledge, mental, moral and spiritual has made such immense strides in these hundreds of years, our ideas of God and His Universe are so much deeper, wider and higher, that the only words in that sentence of the Apostles' Creed which we really interpret exactly as our ancestors did, are the words "the," "and," and "of." Every generation, in which there is a real advance of thought, must shape its theology for itself; though the religious facts which lie behind our theologies remain the same from age to age.

To sum up. Much of the recent belittling of

creeds is worse than a blunder, it is almost a sin ; yet charity compels us to add that many of those whom religious men are apt to dub "Agnostics," are in God's eyes very near to the Kingdom of Heaven. By the term "agnostics" we, of course, only refer to those honest, conscientious "seekers after truth" who revere Truth so much that they prefer to suspend their judgment in matters where no solid basis of evidence is to be found. Truth in itself, and truthfulness of mind are to them so sacred that, in their eyes, to state as a personal conviction any fact of which you are not positively certain is a sort of sacrilege, and bound to darken and degrade the soul. Such a state of mind implies not only a strong sense of personal dignity and responsibility, but is close akin to righteousness. It is severe to itself for the sake of others, animated ever by that purest of motives, the clear intention in all things to convey a right impression.

Can a man who thus thinks the thought that is noblest, and earnestly strives to live the thought he thinks, be aught but true to his best self ; and is he likely to be false to man, or false in the eyes of God ? How dare we say that such a man's life is not a prayer in Christ's Name, even though his lips may never voice a prayer to Him ? Such loving, unselfish rightness of purpose is not far from the purity of heart which sees God—and is far nearer to Him than much of the Phariseeism which glibly condemns him. "Not everyone that saith unto Me,

Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the Will of My Father Which is in Heaven." We are but poor judges of our neighbours ; man sees their outward acts, and draws hasty deductions, God reads the heart-motives.

It was not among religionists that Christ found most to praise when He was on earth. See how he commended not only the praying Publican, but the Roman centurion and the Syro-Phenician woman. Why? Their theological views about Him were probably all wrong. They did not, in all likelihood, know that He was anything but a very good and holy man. No, but their simple, receptive, trustful attitude towards Him, their confidence in His ability and willingness to do them good, their assurance of His perfect sympathy were such that even Christ, with all His optimistic belief in man, was amazed at it: "Verily, verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel." They were true to the light they had, such as it was: they obeyed the promptings of the divine nature within them,—this was why Christ loved them. And in so far as Agnostics do the same, "who maketh us a judge over them?" Let us rather see to it that, with all our privileges and our light, we are as true as they. "More has been given us ; more will be required."

Precisely the same line of thought furnishes us with the answer to the question, "can heathen pray in Christ's Name?" Certainly they can. As

Justin Martyr tells us, "Those of old who lived according to the Logos, i.e. obeyed their highest intuitions, were really Christians, though they have been thought Atheists." Does not S. Paul say exactly the same thing? "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another" (Rom. ii. 14, 15).

More than this; sacred, God-inspired, soul-saving as our Bible is, it is not the only Word of God which has moulded the thoughts and swayed the destinies of the human race. In the Bibles of the great non-Christian religions there are (amid much that is pure childishness) thoughts of God that are so beautiful and true that they can only be out-breathings of the Holy Spirit of God.

Even to those living in heathen darkness, God has not left Himself without a witness. S. Paul recognized the element of truth in heathen creeds (Acts xvii. 23 sqq.), so did Malachi long before him. Not only does this Hebrew prophet say that God's Name is magnified among the heathen, but he distinctly speaks of their offerings as having Jehovah for their object. "For from the rising of the Sun even unto the going down of the same, My Name is great among the Gentiles: and in every place

incense is offered unto My Name, and a pure offering : for My Name is great among the Gentiles " (Mal. i. 11, R.V.). And our Lord endorses this truth, for He tells the Jews that many shall come from the North and from the South, from the East and from the West, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God while they themselves are thrust out. (S. Luke xiii. 29.)

Therefore sinners can and do pray in Christ's Name, so do non-Christians in Christian lands, so do the heathen. And we can easily understand how this comes about. There is no immeasurable chasm between God and man, between the child-soul and the Father-Soul. How can there be so long as there dwelleth in each man the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world? Each man has a lower nature akin to the animal nature, and this it is which drags him down, but in each one of us there is also the higher nature, the essence of God, the divine germ which uplifts us, and is akin to God. This twofold nature it is that alone explains why no man is so bad but that we may find much good in him, if only, like Christ, we know how to look for it and appeal to it; and no man is so good but that, like S. Paul, he at least finds much that is evil in himself.

All men are by nature sons of God, not "children of wrath," not even merely adopted sons, who have first to go through a covenant or compact with God before He recognises them as sons;—adopted

sons ! we are nothing of the kind, we are real sons of God by birth as His spirit-children. And because there is this higher nature within us, this divine germ come direct from God, which is our true self, therefore there is always a healthy spot in us, diseased as we may be, where God can work on us for our good.

“When he came to himself,” says Christ of the Prodigal Son. What a depth of meaning these words open out ! This wreck of a man, Jesus insists, is not the man, only his lower self, ignorant, perverted, corrupt. The other and true self, which bears the stamp of its divine birth, lies hidden beneath this surface grime and rust, and must be released, then you will come to the real man. And when this true self asserts itself ; when the man “comes to himself,” and, obedient to the promptings of the “immortal centre within,” prays,—then how gladly does God hearken to this cry of His child-soul “thirsting for the living God.” “Gladly,” did we say ? this is far too tame a word to express God’s joy and welcome : listen rather to Christ’s own words : “But when he was yet a great way off, his Father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. . . . And the Father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe and put it on him ; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet : and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it ; and let us eat, and be merry. For this my son was dead, and is alive again : he was lost and is found.”

True, the prayer of the worst sinner is gladly heard as soon as he "comes to himself," and, obedient to the promptings of his highest self, turns unto God, saying, "I will arise, and go to my Father." He is then praying as God's true child, and, therefore, according to the Will of God. But this is also equally true, and we must not make light of it. If the Bible gives us this comforting assurance, it lays equal stress on the fact that so long as man follows the unregulated desires of his lower nature, deliberately sins, hugs his sin to his breast and means to go on living in sin—this child's prayer is not heard.

There is a fact well known to electricians. If a telegraph wire touches the ground fairly and squarely, the electric current is instantly arrested. The circuit is as much broken as if you had actually cut the wire deliberately, and no message can be sent or received over that wire. The wire is "grounded," as it is technically called. Now this is exactly what persistent, wilful, deliberate sin does. It "grounds" the connection between God and man. There may still be prayer, but it is no longer a means of grace between God and man. The "fault" in the connection is on man's side and of his own making, and, till he himself mends and removes it, his soul cannot commune with its Father-Soul. Sin and prayer cannot dwell in the same heart at the same time. One or the other must go. They cannot breathe the same atmosphere.



## PART II.



Scientific and Philosophical.



## CHAPTER V.

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SCIENTIFIC OBJECTIONS TO PRAYER.

## *Argument.*

A. HISTORY of the feud between Science and Religion. Both sides forgot that their respective solutions of the Universe-problem were incomplete and provisional. They now realize this, and hatred has given way to mutual respect. More than this, each side has taken a leaf from the other's book : theology is now more scientific, science more religious.

Religion's great debt to Science : it has adopted its main facts, and learnt its scientific methods. We have jettisoned much useless lumber from our Theology, yet we have not lost one single valuable asset, or yielded one inch of our own true ground. We have only eliminated from Christianity its alien elements and excrescences, while retaining all developments of Christian Truth which are developments and not perversions of Christ's Gospel.

B. Science maintains that the religious view of the efficacy of prayer involves a flat denial of the Laws of Nature. This is a world of Eternal Law, not Caprice. The whole evolution of the world's history is pre-determined by laws that never change ; and naturally flows onward in its orderly uniform obedience to these laws. The idea that weather, health, character are dependent on the will of a capricious Power, is utterly unscientific and irrational : a survival of benighted days of ignorance. So, therefore, is Prayer.

Materialist conception of the origin of the world, with modern scientific hypotheses on the origin of life.

## CHAPTER V.

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### SCIENTIFIC OBJECTIONS TO PRAYER.

#### A.

THERE was a time, and this not long ago, well within the memory of any of us, when Science and Religion were at daggers drawn. In a former chapter, we have already stated that, in the past, we religionists were mainly to blame for this antagonism. At every point where scientific discoveries in any way clashed with our theological dogmas we flatly contradicted every statement of science, called scientists by very hard names, and would not let them alone. For instance, when science in its slow, careful, exact, methodical way read God's Book of Nature, spelt out its meaning word by word and sentence by sentence, and, as the result of its accumulated verified evidence, told us that the world was hundreds of millions of years old ; still more, when Charles Darwin, in 1859, published his *Origin of Species* and formulated his Law of Evolution, which has revolutionized modern knowledge,—theologians denounced such language in no measured terms as little short of blasphemy. And this persecution of science, as a rule, was prompted by high motives. In its own mind the Church was firmly convinced

of the identity between the dogmas it imagined to be true and all the highest interests of mankind. In the eyes of a Church which interpreted the Hebrew account of the Creation contained in the first chapter of Genesis in the light of pure and absolute history, and not as a parable, this new scientific teaching was regarded as nothing if not damnable heresy. Such heretics were to be promptly stamped out, like a deadly plague, if mankind in general was to be saved from the poison of its contagion. The sanctity of the Bible, the Authority of the Church, popular prejudices, sarcasm, persecution were some of the weapons employed to annihilate these scientific anarchists.

In self-defence, fighting for the very existence of their cause and on behalf of the Truth, scientists were forced to combine against their common oppressor, to assume the offensive and carry the war into the enemy's own country. In its turn, science openly and boldly assailed Theology and its dogmas, and, as events have proved, for this we owe science a heavy debt. When opponents enter the arena, as in this case, firmly persuaded, on either side, that they are fighting for a righteous cause, the issue is never doubtful. The fittest and truest ideas must survive, and the keener the battle, the sooner will it be over.

Both sides were fighting for the Truth, that is to say, for God. Theologians, backed by God's Book of the Bible (which they often misread),

scientists backed by the Book of Nature, equally God's Book, which they also often misread. Like all special pleaders, each side overstated its case, and looked upon its provisional readings of the facts as final. This passage of arms between them opened the eyes of both. They now see that each is working at different sections of the same problem, that, as yet, their solutions are very unfinished. Both sides have come out of the battle wiser but humbler men, more imbued with mutual respect, if not with a feeling of actual comradeship.

We religionists have had to recognize, in the light of overwhelming revelations in the world of Nature and in the face of scientific facts, that the Universe is far larger and older than we had dreamed, and that everywhere, throughout it, reigns unbroken order, unchanging law, continuous development. We have learnt the lesson. In 1860 adherents of Darwinism were commonly denounced as blasphemers: in 1908 orthodox theologians regard evolution as an established principle. When Queen Victoria came to the throne, the year 4004 B.C. was generally accepted as the date of the Creation of the world: now we measure the age of the world by hundreds of millions of years <sup>a</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> Joly (from the ocean-salt), Geikie (from geological strata), Rutherford (from minerals), calculate the earth's age at anything between ninety and a thousand million years.—v. Arrhenius, "Worlds in the Making." (1908), pp. 42, 43.

Not only have we learnt and adopted the main facts of science, we have done better ; we have learnt its methods. We have borrowed from science its passion for accurate, methodical, painstaking research, its courageous sincerity and reality, its fearless zeal for truth. In every other department we have seen the bases of knowledge tested, verified, scientifically overhauled, and we have gladly subjected our own theology to the same tests. Nowadays we neither ask nor wish that criticism should pause or stay its progress even before the shrine of the Christian Faith. We do not protest now as of old and bid investigators leave at least the Bible untouched. Living in an age dominated by the modern scientific method of thought, we welcome it, and theologians themselves are now foremost in subjecting theology to the fierce searchlight of criticism to see if the truths they proclaim are borne out and verified by the facts themselves. We know that it is not by setting ourselves against the scientific spirit of the age, but by falling into line with it so far as we *honestly* may, that we are likely both to win the age to God, and a wider knowledge of the Truth for ourselves. We have too long presented the truth in a hard dogmatic way, and it is to be feared that the Church is partly answerable for much of the scepticism of the world, because we have not sufficiently endeavoured to show how reasonable religion is, but have lagged behind the best thought



of our day. We are still proclaiming the truths of Christianity in the dogmatic form, the mould of thought, in which it was cast 1500 years ago; a form admirably adapted to that age, not to ours.

The obvious retort: "we want the Christianity not only of 1500 years ago, but of 1875 years ago, if we are to be Christians at all," is as apparent and convincing to us as to those who advance this plea. But this is precisely what modern criticism is offering us. Not all that calls itself Christianity nowadays can show an equally good title to that name. Like every organism, Christianity has often to thrive amid alien environment and borrow from it elements which are foreign to itself. Men of other faiths have adopted Christianity, and introduced into it ideas and practices which had their origin in different surroundings and were intended to minister to other needs. The human element has crept into Christianity, and types of religious life and thought which have little in common with the original stock have been grafted on to it. We must therefore go "back to Christ" and eliminate these borrowed elements of local origin if we would recover the Christianity which expresses the true spirit, aims, principles and faith as we see them in Christ Himself.

But this does not fetter and tie us down to the exclusion of all later developments in Christianity, *provided only it be development and not perversion.* It is one of the chief glories of Christianity that

it encourages independence of religious development. It freely takes from other faiths the truth and the beauty which they contain. And this is not a mark of its weakness but of its strength, the proof that it is indeed the universal religion which it claims to be. What is meant by "going back to Christ" is that in estimating the significance of the development through which Christianity has passed, we must admit nothing as truly Christian which is inconsistent with Christ's own principles. No type of faith which is alien to His Spirit and inconsistent with His ideals can rightly shield itself under the shelter of His Name.

Now this is precisely what the scientific method of criticism is doing. Retracing the history of Christianity to its true source, it has brought us at last face to face with Jesus. It has brushed away the excrescences and cobwebs which had gathered upon God's Door during twenty centuries, and given us back the Gospel of Christ, not in the jargon of schoolmen, but in the language and thought of our own day.

This is what is meant by saying that religion owes a heavy debt to science for teaching theology its scientific methods. We have been greatly the gainers thereby all along the line. Our Bible and our Faith now stand on a firmer basis than ever, and mean a great deal more to us. A scientific study of comparative religions has taught us that Christ is not only the climax, "after Him there is none like

Him, nor any that were before Him"; it has taught us also that He is the fulfilment of all other prophets and all other religions. He is alone; yet every atom of goodness and truth to be found elsewhere finds itself and is found anew in Him. Science has taught us that Nature is God's Book clearly revealing Him, and "we have gone back to Nature and humanity, and found that Christian thought, like the fabled giant, must have its feet on earth for strength and vitality, and yet be seated, with Him Who is its Head, in Heavenly places: that the more Christian Christian thought is, the more truly natural and human will it be" (Bishop of Southwark).

But Theology, while wisely jettisoning some of its useless lumber and borrowing many of the valuable assets of science, has not in the very least capitulated to the modern world, given up one single plank of its true platform by way of compromise or adopted alien principles. On the contrary, it has only taken stock of its belongings, retained all the treasures that it ever possessed, and they are vast, while it has rejected the lumber which it had picked up by the way, mistaking an artificial paste-gem for a true diamond. So it is that now, as never before, Christianity stands on a foundation that cannot be shaken.

And if Theology has gained by borrowing the scientific temper, men of science have returned the compliment and borrowed the religious temper. They, too, have learnt that if Theology is but the

provisional reading of the facts of religion, a human, imperfect and ever-varying interpretation of Scripture, so it is with Science. It is also only a provisional reading of the facts of Nature, with scientific interpretations of the Universe differing in every age. At one time Science spoke as if it carried the key of the Universe in its pocket, now it knows better. The Holy Spirit from Whom cometh every good and every perfect gift has taught scientists, as well as theologians, the need of that modesty, patience and forbearance which means death to dogmatism and to the tendency to judge and condemn those who differ from us.

This is the religious temper which the Holy Spirit is diffusing widely to-day before our eyes. "Men's minds are more and more set towards the spiritual, even when they are set away from Christianity. Materialism has not, for the minds of our generation, the strength or the attractiveness that it once had. Science displays in an unprecedented way the witness of Nature to the wisdom of God" (Lambeth Conference Encyclical, 1908).

At present Science and Religion have not yet joined hands, one day they will. Their solutions of their respective problems are still too incomplete. Even a sincere attempt to bring the very unfinished scientific theories of the present day into perfect accord with the equally unfinished theological interpretations of the Universe of the present day, is bound to fail. Both must continue at their respective tasks honestly

and courageously for many a day, but a finish and a harmony there will be. If God is conducting the education of the human race, it encourages the hope that, as knowledge grows from more to more, the theories of science and the interpretation of theology may one day "make one music as before but vaster." Then misunderstandings between the two will be impossible, now they seem inevitable. Science and Religion are converging towards the same goal, but still wide apart. They still fight: but now they honestly shake hands before they fight, and after.

## B.

One of the chief points on which Science and Theology can *not* agree is Prayer. Very roughly stated, the theologian says, "All prayer is heard," the scientist, "No prayer is heard."

And, undoubtedly, science does raise a very heavy indictment against answers to prayer, as we understand them, basing its whole argument on purely scientific grounds. So plausible is the plea of the scientific objector to the efficacy of prayer that many orthodox believers even are more than half convinced by their arguments.

The great scientific plea against prayer is that belief in the efficacy of prayer involves an ignorance, a denial, a flat contradiction of the universal Laws of Nature. It is asking God to suspend or violate these eternal laws, these well-known fixed and in-

variable modes in which He rules the universe and the affairs of men, to work a miracle, in fact, in order to show favour to this man or that. This, even God, if there be a God, cannot do.

This vast universe, they maintain, is not ruled by Caprice. Everywhere throughout it there is evident unbroken order, unchanging law, continuous development. Everything, man included, is determined by laws that never change, or can change. These eternal Laws of Nature act so truly, uniformly and impartially that if we could suppose an absolutely wise man to have been present at the moment of Creation,—if there ever was such a moment <sup>b</sup>,—he could, from what lay there before him, and from his absolute knowledge of the natural laws and forces at work upon this primal matter itself, have foretold precisely what the Universe would actually be like millions upon millions of years later in this year of grace 1908 A.D. From the very nature of the case, all its subsequent development was already contained in this embryonic matter as the oak is in the little acorn.

Just as a great naturalist like Huxley or Owen can tell, merely by examining the tooth of a creature belonging to some long-extinct race, not only what the characteristics of that race were, the whole form and nature of that animal, but the general nature of

<sup>b</sup> To the end of this Chapter, we are, of course, stating the case from the materialistic point of view, not our own. To us this seemed obvious, till a friendly critic fancied we were giving expression to our own views. Hence this caution.

the scenery amid which such creatures lived : even so could our supposed absolutely wise man easily have read in the primordial embryonic matter before him the whole subsequent evolution of the world from beginning to end. The origin of *nebulæ*, the making of worlds, the growth of life, everything would have been already written there as in an open book. He would have had a vision of the earth as we see it now, with every tree, and animal, and man upon it, down to the minutest detail of its history<sup>c</sup>.

God, if there be a God, not only created the first elementary substance perfect in itself, He subjected it to forces and laws which are equally perfect. God is not a God of caprice and confusion, but of law and order. His laws are so ordered that they work of themselves, reward of themselves, punish of themselves. They are uniform, and therefore impartial. They never show any favouritism, neither do they ever make a mistake or overlook foolish mistakes in others. They are so perfect that not even God can

<sup>c</sup> "A single grain of sand or a drop of water must convey to an Omniscient and Omnipresent Being the history of the whole world of which it forms part. Nay, why should we pause here? The history of that world is in truth bound up so intimately with the history of the Universe, that the grain of sand or drop of water conveys not only the history of the world, but with equal completeness the history of the whole Universe. In fact, if we consider the matter attentively, we see that there cannot be a single atom throughout space which could have attained its present exact position and state, had the history of any part of the Universe, however insignificant, been otherwise than it has actually been, in even the minutest degree." (Proctor, "Other Worlds than Ours.")

alter them now. He made them "very good," as your own Bible says, at the outset. Any alteration in them would imply that there was something in them capable of improvement, something amiss. Even God Himself cannot now change His Mind, for this would imply caprice and imperfection on His part. "God is not a man that He should repent"—and this is what prayer asks Him to do.


Time was when it was pardonable that men should pray for rain or for fine weather, for health or abundant harvests; but it is no longer rational now that the scientific idea of law is so clear. A known law of Nature is a declaration of the Will of whatever Power governs the universe. We know that rain is the necessary result of absolutely defined atmospheric laws which render it inevitable. It is the same with health and disease, and even of character. They are determined for us by clearly defined physiological and psychological laws respectively. The idea that rain, and health, and character are dependent on the will of a capricious Being who can give or withhold them at His pleasure, according as His creatures remember to ask for them or forget so to do, is utterly unscientific and irrational. It belongs to the days when broad margins of human life and thought lay in a gross darkness, and earthquakes, comets, pestilences were angels sent to punish men in God's anger. Now we know that earthquakes, upheavals and submersions of whole continents, and so forth, are all produced naturally by the same gradual and apparently in-



significant causes which we daily see at work now before our very eyes. "Chance" or "acts of providence" are only other words for our ignorance. In everything, however inexplicable it may seem to us as yet, Nature works according to regular, fixed, invariable methods. In time we shall spell them all out, and find them so simple that we shall be amazed we did not see it all along. There is in everything a deliberately mapped-out plan. In the thought of Nature, the seed is already the flower, and animal life in its very lowest form has man as its final goal. All is exactly as was predetermined by the Laws of Nature which are eternal.

Now that ignorance has given place to knowledge in men's minds, confusion to law and order, darkness to light, let us no longer indulge the foolish dream that man's weak and ignorant prayers can avail to work impossible miracles. If there be a God, it is an impertinence and an insult to His Infinite perfection and wisdom to ask Him to suspend or violate His own laws. It is telling Him that He has not arranged everything for the best, offering our counsel, and suggesting a better way than His own.

If it is to rain, it will rain. Sixty millions of years ago, it was already written in the phenomena of the then existing universe whether rain should fall yesterday, to-morrow or a thousand years hence. So with health; it is stupid and impertinent on our part to break the eternal laws of health and then ask God to override them to save us from our own



folly. Nature's laws punish and reward of themselves: they make no mistakes themselves, and overlook none in others. We are here to learn these laws and then obey them, or pay the penalty. It is well that things are so ordered, for our very punishments are blessings in disguise. They form the school in which mankind is being slowly trained in a practical and salutary way.

Either our prayers are in harmony with this eternal Plan, or they are not. If they are, we need not pray, for what we are asking will happen anyhow. If they are not, the eternal Laws, and not we, will prevail, so our prayers are equally useless. Therefore, in either case we are wasting our breath. The whole theory of the efficacy of prayer is an exploded fiction, a survival of superstitious days. If we are to have a creed, let it be a creed which is at least on a level with man's best intelligence; a creed which further enquiry and clearer light will strengthen and not destroy.

In a word, says science, it is in reality as foolish to pray for rain or fine weather as it would be to pray that the sun should set at noonday. It is as foolish to pray for the healing of disease, or for daily bread, as it is to pray for rain or fine weather. It is as foolish to pray for a pure heart, or for peace of mind, as it is to pray for health in sickness or daily bread. All the events which have occurred, are now occurring, or will ever occur are the simple results of the laws of cause and effect. They are

absolutely dependent on the working of the simple Laws of Nature. These it is our plain duty as rational men to investigate, and as rational men to obey, if we would enjoy health and happiness. Thus alone can we attain either.

In our reply, we shall have to refer so constantly to the materialist conception of the evolution of the world, that it may be as well to give a brief sketch of it here. Shortly stated it is somewhat as follows<sup>d</sup> :—

“This world of ours was once a floating fiery cloud, a nebula or mist, consisting of a homogeneous mass of atoms, the molecules of which were kept asunder by excessive heat. Then came a period when the heat declined, and when the atoms, obeying their innate desires, rushed to one another, and concentrating, formed, amongst others, our sun, which, at first, practically filled the solar world. But as the sun cooled, and contracted, and rotated, it became a sphere in the centre of our world, and cast off planets. Our little planet, the earth, cooled quickly<sup>e</sup>, shrank in size, and wrinkled. From

<sup>d</sup> Winwood Reade, “The Martyrdom of Man.” We have selected him for many reasons: (1) He is clear and lucid, and (subject to a few corrections) he fairly states the materialistic views of the days when scientific objections to prayer were formulated. (2) His book sold by tens of thousands, and so his ideas were sown broadcast, and appealed more to the popular mind than purely scientific works. (3) Very few additional notes bring him up to date.

<sup>e</sup> “If we start with  $-273^{\circ}$  (C) as absolute zero, and the sun’s temperature as  $10,000^{\circ}$ , and adopt the view that our earth assumed its

a glowing globe of gas, it became a ball of liquid fire, enveloped in a smoky cloud. Close over the surface, vapour of salt was suspended in the air: next, a layer of carbonic acid gas: next oxygen and nitrogen, and vapour of water, or steam<sup>f</sup>. After long epochs, the surface of the globe cooled, and flakes of solid matter floated on its molten sea of fire. Thin flakes caked together and formed a film. In time, this film hardened and thickened, but subterranean eruptions often ripped it open and poured forth masses of lava, and heaps of ashes<sup>g</sup>. Gradually the salt above the surface of the earth condensed and fell like snow upon the earth, several feet deep (?). The oceans lying overhead<sup>h</sup>, in the layers above described, then descended and sea appeared. From the shape, the attitude and revolutions of our planet resulted then, as now, an unequal distribution of the sun's heat, and winds arose in the air; currents, in the sea; the sun sucked up the waters of the sea; rain-clouds were formed, and fresh water was bestowed upon the land. The underground

first crust at about 1000°, Kelvin has calculated it would not take more than 100 years before the crust's temperature would sink to 100° (212° Fahr.), when low organisms could exist." Arrhenius, "Worlds in the Making," pp. 40 and 89.

<sup>f</sup> "The atmosphere of the earth immediately after the formation of the earth-crust contained some oxygen, besides much nitrogen, carbonic acid and water vapour." (Ibid., pp. 59, 60, where the modern scientific analysis of the *then* atmosphere is fully given.)

<sup>g</sup> cf. Arrhenius, chap. i. and pp. 54 and 55.

<sup>h</sup> "At 365° water-vapour can first be condensed to liquid water." Ibid., p. 42.

fires assisted the planet's growth by transforming the soils into crystalline structures, and by raising the rocks thus altered to the surface." We can readily follow this evolution thus far, but here we are asked to accept a miracle greater than any recorded in the Bible. "When the thick cloud or veil, which, owing to the excessive heat, had hitherto enveloped the earth, lifted, now that the earth had cooled,—then the sunlight was at last able to enter the turbid waters of the primeval sea, and an interesting event took place. *The earth became big with young.* There are always in water a multitude of specks which are usually minute fragments of soil. But now appeared certain specks which, though they resembled the others, possessed certain properties of a very peculiar kind. First they brought forth little specks, precise copies of themselves. And secondly they performed in their own persons elaborate chemical operations. Imbibing water and air, they manufactured those elements, with the assistance of the solar rays, into the compounds of which their own bodies were composed, giving back to the water those components which they did not require.

And then appeared other little specks which swallowed up the first, and manufactured them into compounds more complex still, of which they, the second-comers, were composed.

The first kind of specks were embryonic plants. The second were embryonic animals. And in both

cases their life came from solar heat. Life, in fact, is bottled sunshine. These dots of animated jelly, without any form or figure, swimming unconsciously in the primeval sea, were the ancestors of man<sup>1</sup>."

This was written in 1875 by a clever popular writer on scientific matters, but it fairly represents the views of his day as held by materialists. Modern science has, however, abandoned many cosmogonic hypotheses and adopted new ones in the last thirty years.

Thus, Prof. Arrhenius, in his famous recent book "Worlds in the Making" (1908) throws discredit on Herschel's suggestion of the evolution of stellar nebulae, and Laplace's thesis concerning the formation of the solar system out of the universal nebula; as well as Kant's idea of the origin of the universe from an original chaos of stationary dust. "The laws of mechanics teach that no rotation can be

<sup>1</sup> In no flippant mood, very much the reverse, we *must* quote these lines (who wrote them?): they so exactly represent the two opposed points of view:—

A fire-mist and a planet,  
A crystal and a shell,  
A jelly-fish and a saurian,  
And caves where cave-men dwell;  
Then a sense of law and beauty,  
And a face turned from the clod—  
Some call it Evolution,  
And others call it God.

set up in a body which is originally stationary, by the influence of a central force like gravitation."

According to Arrhenius, the modern idea seems to be that there never was an origin of the Universe, but that nebulae have originated from suns, and suns from nebulae from all eternity, and will thus continue in an eternal cycle, in which there is neither beginning nor end. "The recognition of the indestructibility of energy," says he, "forces this conclusion upon one. When energy is 'degraded' (loss of heat) in bodies which are in the solar state, the energy is 'elevated,' raised to a higher level, in bodies which are in a nebular state: so there is an eternal balance of gain and loss, world without end."

The idea of "spontaneous generation" is now entirely given up as an explanation of the origin of life on the earth. Lord Kelvin and others have shown that inorganic matter can never produce organic life. All experiments to prove spontaneous generation have failed<sup>k</sup>.

<sup>k</sup> If spontaneous generation were proved to-morrow, the theologian would gladly accept it. To Theology, this would only be a restatement of Gen. ii. 7: "God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul." Indeed, the theologian would welcome a discovery that bridged the chasm between matter and life, and evolved all from *one* primordial substance. It would be his ideal of Divine Evolution with a God of Love behind it as its driving-power. What the theologian will not concede is the eternity of self-existent matter. "For nature, although men ascribe to it wisdom and power, and personify it as if it were a goddess, is but a name for an *effect*, whose cause is God."

Helmholtz' hypothesis is now generally adopted by scientists: "It seems to me a perfectly just scientific procedure if we, after the failure of all our attempts to produce organisms from lifeless matter, put the question, whether life has had a beginning at all, or whether it is not as old as matter and whether seeds have not been carried from one planet to another and have developed everywhere where they have fallen on a fertile soil." (1871<sup>1</sup>.)

Arrhenius endorses this hypothesis of panspermia, and improves on it. He is "convinced that the Universe in its essence has always been what it is now. Matter, energy and life have only varied as to shape and position in space<sup>m</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> Sir Wm. Thomson (later Lord Kelvin) endorsed this view in his presidential address to the British Association at Edinburgh in 1871.

<sup>m</sup> Crude and hypothetical as his theory may seem, thus concinctly stated, Arrhenius makes out an extremely strong and rational case for his Cosmogony. His theory of the evolution of the Universe, his thesis that from all eternity nebulae may have originated from suns, and suns from nebulae, his thermodynamic explanation of the eternal indestructibility of heat and energy, are exceedingly clever and ably advocated. In our scientific ignorance, we find his theory of panspermia less convincing.



CHAPTER VI. PART I.

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SCIENTIFIC OBJECTIONS EXAMINED.

### *Argument.*

HAS materialism lost, for our generation, the attractiveness it once had? Summary of Materialist and Theist creeds. Both cannot be right: which is wrong? The purely apologetic attitude of theist disputants an error of judgment prejudicial to religion's best interests. Immense and unfair advantage of a critic over an apologist. Weakness of our opponents' position in their treatment of life as if it were subject to the same inelastic laws as inorganic matter. It ignores consciousness, a creative, potent, disturbing factor. Consciousness defined. "The chasm between consciousness and brain-action impassable" (Tyn-dall). Ignoring consciousness, the mechanical application of Evolution and Laws of Nature to conscious living organisms signally breaks down. Therefore, these two chief weapons of Materialists in their attack on Theists become useless. Wallace, Darwin, Huxley, and modern evolutionists admit this intrinsic flaw in Evolution, as ordinarily interpreted. Evolution, *plus* consciousness behind it, quite adequate to solution of Universe-problem, and not irreconcilable with development of consciousness and reason from lowest organic forms right up to man. Illustration. "All is one scheme, and God is the meaning of it."

## CHAPTER VI<sup>a</sup>. PART I.

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### SCIENTIFIC OBJECTIONS EXAMINED.

#### A.

**I**N the preceding chapter we have endeavoured to state the scientific objections to the efficacy of prayer as fairly, strongly and candidly as even our critics could wish.

We also readily and gratefully admit that all modern scientists do not endorse such purely materialistic views as these. At the Pan-Anglican Congress Mr. Balfour said :—

“In this matter, in my own lifetime, I have seen a great change. I remember the day when it was thought by a large school that there was a fundamental conflict between the religious aspect of the world and the scientific, and that between the two there could be no compromise. The people of whom I speak, and of whom there are many representatives still amongst us, imagined that science was founded upon experience and induction, and that religion represented a last and dying phase of history which went back, and was lost among the early and savage superstitions of mankind. They supposed that compromises were doomed to early extinction, and that the sphere of science would eat into that of religion as the ocean

<sup>a</sup> The argument of pages 155—200, is mainly scientific and psychological. Readers who do not care for a purely academic treatment of the subject will find the alternative Chapter VII. more satisfactory and convincing.

eats into some coast-line, gradually eroding it, and that, though a retaining wall might be put up here and there, the ultimate result was inevitable, a result which would compel us to look out upon the universe, of which mankind is a temporary citizen, as merely a mechanical state of facts, owning no intelligent Creator, leading to no great end. For my own part, I believe that view, however widely it may yet be held among certain sections of our fellow-countrymen, is already antiquated, that it is of the past, and that it is not destined to survive to trouble us. . . . Indeed, the growth of science has made it easier to believe that the world had a rational and benevolent Creator."

At the same Congress, another scientist, Mr. Searle, lecturer in experimental physics at Cambridge, contradicted the modern hypothesis which we quoted at the end of our last Chapter, viz., that matter, energy and life are eternal, and have only varied as to shape and position in space. Mr. Searle's statement is cited in full because it supplies an answer to a certain portion of the scientific indictment which none but a scientist is in a position to refute :—

"If there was no motion in the universe, we could set no limit to its age, past and future : but modern investigations show such a view to be untenable. While the total amount of energy remains unchanged, there is a progressive diminution in its availability, and when the further distribution of energy ceases to be possible, the universe will be physically and chemically inert : in other words, dead. Tracing the operation of physical laws backwards, we find greater and greater availability

of energy. But there is a limit to this process, for the total sum of energy is limited. Only a finite number of years have elapsed since the creation of the Universe.

Between life and matter there is evidently a profound difference. Life involves individuality of a kind not possessed by a molecule. The life of an individual preserves its identity, though the body which it controls is never composed of the same molecules for two minutes together. Experiments lead to the conviction that, in the present order of things, the linking of life with matter can only arise from the action of living organisms, and thus we reach the conception that living organisms did not appear on the earth as the unaided result of actions between mere molecules. The conclusion is that the first living organisms were created <sup>b</sup>. ”

We shall now attempt to examine the scientific objections to prayer raised in the last chapter, for they are still very much alive even now. It may be true that “Materialism has not, for our generation, the strength or attractiveness that once it had” (Lambeth Encyclical); it may be equally true that “it is a cruel libel to say that scientific men are naturally inclined to disbelief, since in the physical laboratories of this country probably

<sup>b</sup> cf. Lord Kelvin: “Science brings a vast mass of inductive evidence against the hypothesis of spontaneous generation. Dead matter cannot become living matter without coming under the influence of matter previously alive. This seems to me as sure a teaching of science as the law of gravitation” (quoted by Arrhenius, “Worlds in the Making,” p. 216). It is only fair to add that Arrhenius in the same book, pp. 191—230, very plausibly attempts to answer Mr. Searle’s argument. But see page 139 and footnote to it.

a larger proportion of active Christian men could be found than in any kind of business" (Searle); yet even Mr. Balfour has to own "there are still many representatives of the materialistic school amongst us."

More than this, even if we grant that the force of materialistic objections to prayer and to religion generally is fast dying and all but spent in the eyes of deeply thinking men, the oft-refuted scientific arguments so ably advanced by Tyndall and Galton, in connection with the celebrated "Hospital Test" case, still have an immense hold on the popular imagination. New ideas, be they true or false, may require a long time to take deep root in the mind of the "man in the street," but when once they have fairly struck root, it is all but impossible to eradicate them. And the worst of it is that these are the very people who seldom grasp the distinction between a hypothesis and a fact. Our modern education has universalized a thin veneer of shallow information upon every subject under the sun,—information mostly got from a pet newspaper,—so that everyone has an opinion on all subjects, few a conviction on any. For such persons, materialism with its dogmatic pronouncements on great questions, has a peculiar fascination, and an observant student of human nature will find that it still appeals forcibly to many more minds than we are apt to imagine. "It, being dead, yet speaketh."

It is, therefore, now as much as ever, the bounden

duty of those who dissent from materialism to state its case as strongly and candidly as they can, to formulate their objections, to set forth their own positive beliefs in a straightforward and intelligible way.

The question at issue is one which touches the deepest interests of men ; it is an essentially practical, a vital question, deeply influencing men's lives. There are controversies of a purely theoretical nature where it is quite right to suspend one's judgment ; where it is quite reasonable to assume any one of three attitudes — belief, disbelief, or agnosticism. But let the question once pass from the region of theory to that of practice, and you can no longer leave the matter undecided. The religious controversy falls under this category. Our very lives depend on the answer we give to the question, "Is there a God, or is there no God?" To accept the view, for instance, that the universe is every moment guided by a good God is to accept a principle according to which the whole length and breadth of a man's experience must henceforth be conformed. In precisely the same way, to accept the view that there is no God, but only blind unconscious Force directing the Universe, is again to accept a principle which must wield an immense influence on any person who adopts such a theory. Let a man hold either of these views, and to him nothing is as it would be if he held the other. Neither the stars in their courses, nor the moral law in the heart ;

neither God, his neighbour, nor himself retains the values under the one which they hold under the other.

Therefore to any one of us the question at issue between the two great opposing schools of thought is not a matter of indifference, very far from it. To forsake the one interpretation of the universe and adopt the other literally creates a new moral world. Nothing is left as before. Our new creed changes whatever it touches as if by magic into a new thing, all our values are altered, and the whole tenor of our life and character is transfigured.

If this is so, then, to halt between two opinions is suicidal. We must make up our minds and take a definite stand: "if the Lord be God, follow Him: if Baal be God, then follow him."

Now what are the two interpretations of the Universe between which we have to make our choice?

There is, to begin with, Materialism. It practically says: "There is no God. The only God<sup>c</sup> is Force or Energy, an eternal Force which governs the universe according to the fixed and invariable modes in which it manifests itself, the Laws of Nature. These laws are uniform, and, therefore, impartial. Learn them, obey them, or it will be all the worse for you. All prayer is a waste of

<sup>c</sup> This paradox has been criticized. Of course, we mean "There is no personal God in the sense of Creator. In the sense of First Cause, God is but Force or energy."



breath, for you cannot coax these unchangeable laws and forces to alter their prescribed course. All is predetermined, evolving according to a clearly-defined plan, and no power in heaven or earth can change what is to be. Life is a struggle for existence, and in this struggle the fittest survive. It is simply through more loyal obedience to the Laws of Nature, through better adaptation to his surroundings that man has developed better than his fellow-animals and come to the top. In a sense he is Nature's crown, but he is, after all, a mere speck. The universe is so great that the life of a single man belongs to the minute details of Nature: we are, in her sight, as the rain-drop in the sky. Whether a man lives, or whether a man dies, is as much a matter of indifference to Nature as whether a rain-drop falls upon a field and feeds a blade of grass, or falls upon a stone and is dried to death. —The soul is not immortal. There are no rewards and punishments in a future state. The only Heaven that lies before us is the perfectibility of Humanity. This is man's only rational creed.

“Take the life of any single man, and it is a meaningless farcè. Survey mankind as One, and there you have an immortal Being, and a glorious future life, a Heaven in the ages far away. Not for us individuals is this immortality, this Heaven, but for the One, the Humanity, of whom we are the insignificant units. Though we perish, Humanity never dies, but grows from age to age more and

more noble, slowly evolving, ripening unto perfection. Our religion is Humanity. Our Faith is the perfectibility of Man. We shall never see this Heaven in our lifetime; indeed, in the struggle to reach this goal, for us and for countless generations after us there must be many a sorrow, many a labour, many a tear, for it is ordained that mankind should be elevated by misfortune, and that happiness should grow out of misery and pain. In each generation the human race has had to suffer and struggle that their children might profit by their woes. Our own present prosperity is founded on the agonies of the past. We are better off than were our fathers. Is it, therefore, unjust that we should suffer for the benefit of those who are to come?"

Such is the gospel of Materialism: and what does Theism preach? This is its creed: "There is a living personal God Who created the Universe; a God Who is not only an Almighty Force, a supreme Intelligence, but a loving Heart. He did not merely create the Universe, set the world perfectly agoing, subjecting it to laws so admirably ordained that even He cannot now interfere with them, and then leave it to work out its own evolution. God's universe is no mere clock-work self-directing machine. Moment by moment God is guiding His Universe. 'In Him, we and all things live, and move and have our being,' for the world is one Whole and God is the meaning of it. It is His

Presence in it that gives the Universe its unity and its life. But God is not merely a fine name for the Universe; He is not only indwelling in it; but immeasurably greater and higher than anything He has made, and on Him all things absolutely depend.

“Above all, this supreme, almighty, all-wise, loving and eternal God is our Father, and we are His children, His spirit-children. Therefore, far from prayer being a waste of breath, it is our very life-blood, the one channel through which our thirsty soul draws its living waters from the Fountain-Head. More than this, not only is prayer a communion and reunion of the child-soul with the Father-Soul, it is a potent factor with God. It moves the Hand that moves the Universe. God wants us His children to be fellow-workers together with Him in His great Purpose of establishing His Kingdom of Love on earth. But we are free moral agents, and He wants us to co-operate with Him of our own freewill and accord. Prayer is the way in which we consent to fall into line with our Father’s Will. So it is that even God will not, cannot dispense with our prayers.

“There is a future life, for the human soul is as immortal as the Father-Soul from Which it sprang.

“It is not true that the life of even one single man is a meaningless farce. Man is not as unimportant as a rain-drop. ‘Ye are of more value than many sparrows.’ Each child of God is as precious in His eyes as if he were the one and only object of God’s Providence. True, man is a mere speck in com-

parison with the sun, moon, and stars, but mere bulk is not the test of value in God's sight. A fly to God is nobler than a mountain, and man, His child, He has crowned with glory: 'Thou hast made him but little lower than the angels, and coverest him with glory and honour: Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands.' Man is to God as 'the apple of His eye.'

"Suffering is a mysterious fact, it is true, but God has shown us in Himself, when He revealed Himself to us in the fulness of His Godhead in Christ, that only through suffering can we be made perfect. Even as Christ Himself only achieved His victory through the Cross, so it is with us. It is through the cross of suffering, and especially of self-sacrificing suffering, that we conquer. The trials which even a S. Paul called 'a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him,' are really angels of God's Love sent to meet us on our way, guiding true souls unto a high and splendid perfection. "Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Now here are two readings of the same facts, and they are as wide apart as the poles. One includes God in the Universe, the other excludes Him, and, as we have seen, according as we accept the one creed or the other, the effect on our life and character will be immensely different. A principle is involved in our decision which determines our atti-

tude towards everything that enters into our life-experience. Our choice creates for us the world in which we mean to live henceforth : it colours our view of life and death, sin and virtue ; there is nothing which it does not transfigure.

Both Materialist and Theist cannot be right. Which is wrong, and where is the flaw ? Scientists are spelling their interpretation of God's Universe out of God's own Book of Nature ; we are reading ours from God's other Book, the Bible. If (as we believe) there is a God, both interpretations should agree, yet they do not.

Some will suggest readily enough : "Take your answer from the Bible." But from the very nature of the case, Scripture-proofs are not admissible here. Scientists do not believe in the Revelation of the Bible, and they would naturally contend that an appeal to the Bible involved the fallacy of taking for granted the very point which has to be proved.

For the time being, therefore, Theists consent to put Revelation aside, and to meet Materialists on neutral ground. Each side states its case, which has to be judged by the impartial audience on its own merits. From a purely rational point of view, each of the opposing schools recognizes the fact that its solution of the problem is still incomplete, but each professes to offer a thoroughly workable hypothesis which covers all the facts with which it has to deal. Each offers a master-key for the many locked secrets of the universe, and promises a reve-

lation of order in what seems discord and chaos. Which hypothesis is the more reasonable?

B.

We waive, for the moment, all appeal to Holy Scripture, and we meet our critics on neutral ground, but hitherto our opponents have enjoyed an immense advantage which we refuse any longer to concede. Theists have too long been content to assume the character of mere apologists, that is to say, to remain purely on the defensive while our opponents have been allowed to adopt the far more advantageous position of assailants.

In argument, as in actual strategy, he who carries the war into the enemy's country starts from the outset with the odds immensely in his favour. Our opponents have cleverly realized this; they have boldly attacked the weak places of our stronghold, often carried them by assault; pointed out our failure and claimed the victory. They have never been attacked themselves, so they have had no position to defend, and onlookers have naturally concluded that the materialist position was ever so much stronger than our own.

On principle, therefore, we decline to accept the disadvantageous position of mere apologists, compelled to prove that the whole of our assertions are true, while our critics have only to prove that some of our statements do not cover the facts. We insist that they have a position of their own to defend which

is no more impregnable than ours. We admit that our solution of the Universe-riddle is only provisional and still unfinished, but they are in precisely the same plight. Why, then, should we continue to allow our position to appear, in the eyes of men of the world, much weaker than it really is by permitting our critics to point out its weak spots while we never criticize theirs ?

*A tu quoque* may not be worth much ; but if we can prove that the materialistic hypothesis is no stronger, indeed far weaker than our own ; that it does not cover the facts of the universe by any means as satisfactorily as the Theistic view ; we shall inspire our own rank and file with fresh enthusiasm, put new heart and life into the troubled and perplexed, and prove to the world at large that scientists have not made out their case nearly as fully as they imagined.

Scientists pin their faith to the infallibility of the Law of Evolution, the Laws of Nature, and the light of human reason. On the strength of these *shibboleths* they claim to have solved the riddle of the Universe.

We boldly question the infallibility of every single one of these three fundamental principles of theirs. In a sense, they are true principles, but only subject to very many reservations and qualifications.

Let us explain our meaning. Science deals with natural facts. The world of inorganic matter is its special province. There it has discovered and

classified laws which hold good uniformly in the *physical* world,—the Laws of Nature. More than this, science has carefully studied these Laws, and enabled man to achieve a wondrous mastery over Nature by showing him how to harness these Laws to do his bidding. In a word, science has conquered Nature by obeying her.

Equally with scientists we acknowledge these Laws of Nature. We maintain that they obtain universally wherever we have to deal with inert matter; indeed, wherever matter comes into our reckoning, whether in the inorganic world or in our own selves, so far as our bodies are parcels of matter.

But here we part company with them. We believe that as soon as we quit the world of purely inert matter and deal with animated matter or life,—especially in the higher organisms, and most of all in man,—we enter a complex sphere where the simplicity which usually attends the application of the Laws of Nature completely vanishes. Not only so, but a new and potent factor comes in.

Man, a moral being, stands on a plane immeasurably higher than a crystal or even a tree, not merely because he is the crown of the evolutionary process, but far more because in man we find a highly disturbing factor, consciousness, in full swing—and, as we believe, a creative consciousness.

Now this is a factor which should count for much in our calculations. Its originating, initiative power,



as we hope to show later on, is so great that it produces results which no human knowledge of the antecedents, however infinite, could have predicted.

Consciousness makes man no mere mechanism, but a creature of motives and actions far too subtle, variable and complex to be fairly brought under the operation of inelastic, inflexible Laws of Nature just as if he were a bare parcel of matter.

Professor Tyndall anticipated this difficulty : "Our bodies are never for two moments the same, yet the consciousness remains, and consciousness without brain-action is conceivable. The chasm between brain-action and consciousness is impassable. Here is a rock upon which materialism must split, whenever it professes to be a complete philosophy of the human mind."

What is this consciousness? Can we define or even describe it? There is in man a mysterious something which eludes the investigator, be he anatomist or psychologist, a residuum that refuses to be ignored, an immortal centre which knows that it is, and calls itself "I," and survives all the "fluxes" of the body. Not only is it conscious of the moments as they pass, the hair-breadth of the present, but it remembers the past and anticipates the future, and makes our life an eternal NOW, for it is a something which binds together all the things which enter into our life-experience, and so gives life a living unity. It is not only the controlling principle of our life directing everything for us,

but it takes every single thing that happens to us,—our thoughts, our feelings, our experience generally, and binds all these into one continuous whole. Thus it is that amid the flux of things there is one thing fixed, an immovable focus, consciousness, the nucleus of our very being. To adapt the well-known lines :—

“It is within ourselves, it takes no rise  
From outward things, whate’er you may believe,  
There *is* an immortal centre in us all,  
Where truth abides in fulness.  
All round, wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in.”

There, in this immortal centre within ourselves, “sits the helmsman, his hand on the tiller. There the log is kept, the reading of which is the biography of our individual lives.” And it is this permanent, creative, controlling consciousness within us that makes man stand for *permanent* interests. We call it life, we call it soul, we call it by various names, and we do not scientifically know what it is,—faith calls it the image, the child of the Universal Consciousness (God) which pervades, vivifying and unifying it, the whole universe, and wells up in each one of us, “the true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” And the whole trend of modern thought is more and more coming round to this view. Be that as it may, not only common-sense, but science itself rebels against its being nothing, and science dare not call

it reason or imagination. As already said, even Tyndall admits that. "There is an impassable chasm between consciousness and brain-action." Consciousness is not a mere combination of our faculties (reason, memory, feeling, &c.), but itself, as we shall see, the cause of the birth of them all, so it cannot possibly be explained as their resultant. These secondary faculties are but its instruments (its necessary instruments in this finite world) in its quest for the "real" which lies beyond the things as they appear to our senses.

This is the self that is ever one and the same throughout our changing years, which binds together all our knowledge in one living unity; which guides and shapes our lives and is ever seeking after its own perfect self-realization; for, conditioned as it is by being bound to a human body, development is the law of human personality<sup>d</sup>. Even Jesus "increased in wisdom, as well as in stature, and in favour with God and Man."

<sup>d</sup> Science is awakening to this fact. This book was already in the press when the British Association was held at Dublin. In the President's address we read: "It is impossible to know whether or not plants are conscious; but it is consistent with the doctrine of continuity that *in all living things there is something psychic*, and if we accept this point of view we must believe that in plants there exists a faint copy of what we know as consciousness in ourselves." Of course Mr. F. Darwin would not define or account for the origin of consciousness as we do. He would assign to it a perfectly natural birth. But we are glad to see science penetrating into a region which it had hitherto left to dreamers.

And it is just because science ignores this consciousness that it fails to understand life, or man.

As to the Universal Consciousness which we call God, science, being concerned with exact thought, does not deny such a possibility but adopts an attitude of Agnosticism and refuses to take into its calculations a factor of which it knows nothing on verified evidence. Darwin (1873) owned that the grandeur and order of this wondrously-arranged Universe eliminated chance and pointed to an Intelligent First Cause or God. Spencer also postulates some Unknowable Power behind phenomena, on which these phenomena somehow depend. But scientists insist that although there seems to be a controlling Power or Consciousness in and behind the Universe, we cannot solve this riddle or know anything about this Power, and must ignore Him. In Bacon's phrase, we must rest satisfied with "second causes," and confine ourselves to a wholly physical interpretation of the phenomena among which we live, and by which our lives are supposed to be shaped. The only causes, therefore, which science knows are these "second causes," the observed and classified methods or Laws according to which the Power Unknowable, that pervades the Universe, actually operates.

But is this logical? If behind these "second causes" there lie two other causes higher and stronger than they,—human consciousness, and, still more, the Universal Consciousness,—can we ignore

them, and call our system scientific? Are we not building a universal philosophy on a foundation of sand, when we omit from our reckoning the controlling and creating first causes which alone produce and explain these "second causes"? If there is a God, as Darwin hinted, or an Unknowable Power, as Spencer suspected, behind phenomena, unifying and vivifying these phenomena, then, it is unscientific to ignore Him, or, as someone has bluntly put it, "to politely conduct the Deity to the confines of His Universe and there give Him His passports."

Be this as it may, human consciousness is a reality, and in every question dealing with life "consciousness" or "personality" is a vital factor. We are pledged to it; for us it is the one key that fits the lock of the Universe.

Science dare not call it nothing, as Tyndall shows: but it ignores it for precisely the same reason that it ignores the Universal Consciousness, God: because it is a mysterious something which eludes the investigator, be he anatomist or psychologist. Yet it is there, all the same, this "psychic something."

And this brings us to our next point, which some men of science already recognize, that facts recently discovered are altogether irreconcilable with the infallibility of the law of evolution, or rather with the *mechanical* interpretation of the doctrine of evolution which has been in vogue for the last fifty years.

## C.

Since the epoch-making publication of their *Theory of Natural Selection* by Mr. Darwin and Mr. Wallace in 1858, and the appearance of the *Origin of Species* in 1859, Evolution has been regarded as an established and universally accepted truth which has outgrown the trammels of controversy. Till quite recently anyone who presumed to call the universality of its application into question simply laid himself open to general derision.

But is the doctrine of evolution as infallible as its advocates would have us believe? Everyone recognizes the immense debt the world owes to Charles Darwin. His discovery set afoot a revolution in the general opinions of mankind as great as Galileo's or Newton's. It was the birthday of modern science, and of the application of those exact scientific and historical methods which have overhauled and tested the foundations of knowledge in every department, and placed it on a sound basis. In a sense we have seen the fulfilment of Huxley's prophecy made at the Dublin British Association of 1878: "Whoever may be speaking at this British Association thirty years hence will find that the very paradoxes and horrible conclusions, things that are now thought to be going to shake the foundations of the world, will by that time have become parts of everyday knowledge, and will be taught in our schools as accepted truth."

All this we gratefully admit. Evolution has proved little short of a divine Revelation, a master-key for many locked secrets, a most fruitful hypothesis. For half a century it has enabled us to co-ordinate facts, to introduce law and order into what had hitherto seemed nothing but caprice, disorder and chaos. But there are sections of the teaching of Darwin which even his adherents are beginning to surrender, and it is felt daily more and more that the doctrine of Evolution must now be re-affirmed with many qualifications. It is no longer the fetish of scientists that it was even six or seven years ago when the writer of the article on Evolution in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1902), xxviii. 342, could say : " Since Professors Huxley and Sully wrote their masterly essays in the ninth edition of this *Encyclopædia*, the doctrine of evolution has outgrown the trammels of controversy and has been accepted as a fundamental principle. Writers on biological subjects no longer have to waste time or space in weighing evolution against this or that philosophical theory or religious tradition : philosophical writers have frankly admitted it, and the supporters of religious tradition have made broad their phylacteries to write on them the new words."

These words could hardly be written now. Many men of science accept it with so many reservations that it is in their hands virtually a new doctrine : philosophers speak of it disparagingly as utterly inapplicable to psychological facts : the " supporters

of religious tradition" argue that any consideration of man which ignores his spiritual faculty is misleading and unscientific.

Religionists do not disparage evolution, very far from that. The "word Evolution is written in capital letters on our own phylactery." We firmly believe in the Evolution of life from the amœba up to man; in the evolution of thought, of character, of history, of religion, of the Bible itself, but with many qualifications. And we equally firmly believe that it is precisely because the extreme advocates of Evolution ignore the potent factor "consciousness," that their valuable discovery loses much of its intrinsic value.

Theists are, for the most part, confirmed Evolutionists nowadays, but theirs is an Evolution with consciousness,—and, we would add, especially the Universal Consciousness,—as the driving-power behind it all, its Omnipotent Director.

One of the greatest evolutionists, Prof. Wallace,—Darwin's co-discoverer of evolution,—maintains much the same view of it as we do. He holds the essential identity of man's bodily structure with that of the animal world: he agrees that this bodily structure has been derived from the lower animals. But Wallace will not allow that man's consciousness has thus been derived. This great scientist teaches that there are at least three stages in the development of the organic world when some new cause or power must necessarily have come into action.



There is an impassable chasm, he tells us, between the organic and the inorganic, and in the passage from the one to the other a new cause must have come into action. The next stage is the passage from plants to animals. The third stage is the introduction in man of his most characteristic and noblest faculty, the consciousness or soul which raises him far and away above the brutes, and opens up possibilities of almost indefinite advancement<sup>e</sup>.

We know that Wallace is a suspect in the modern evolutionary camp, and that his convictions are attributed to the influence of his present spiritual tendencies. We are also aware that Evolutionists will see in this theory of his a *Deus ex machinâ* introduced to cut a Gordian knot and work impossible miracles. It will also lay itself open to the

<sup>e</sup> It is almost an impertinent presumption on our part to make such a suggestion ; but we believe that two stages alone are necessary. The chasm between the inorganic and the organic *is* impassable. Lord Kelvin and almost all modern scientists concede that. But is there any further chasm in organic life from the lowest form of organic life up to man, its crown? Is there not a "psychic something," a consciousness in plants and animals which is a faint copy of what we know as consciousness in ourselves? Is it not, in each case, the outcome, part and parcel of the Universal Consciousness immanent in the Universe, unifying and vivifying it all, and thus the consciousness of the lower organisms is in some sort of way akin to ours, though vastly, abnormally different in degree? We have already stated (see footnote, page 139), that we should welcome a discovery that bridged the chasm between matter and life, thus making all development consist of *one* stage only, with Love Divine behind it as Evolution's key.

charge of a multiplicity of new and imaginary creations. But do these insinuations carry any real weight? If our view of consciousness, and especially of an Immanent yet Transcendent Universal Consciousness, has any truth in it, then the Power controlling, guiding the Universe is a helmsman who never leaves the tiller for one single instant. We believe that Christ's words, "My Father worketh hitherto," are scientifically and philosophically true to the very letter. Creation is a never-ending process going on at the present moment.

And does the transition from plants to animals, animals to man, need a miraculous creative act at all? If the "psychic something" or consciousness, which we and scientists alike see in plants, is itself part and parcel of the Universal Consciousness which quickens and unifies the whole Universe, then, in a very faint way, it is akin to our own consciousness, precisely as protoplasm is akin to man. If the Divine Immanence means anything, it means this: "The Universe is one whole, and God is the meaning of it." It is the Universal Consciousness, the God-Soul that quickens and binds it all together; and plants, animals, all animated parcels of matter, are such simply because this Universal Consciousness is ever present in them, just as my own consciousness is present in my finger-nails.

Let us try and make our meaning clearer by an illustration. "There is an inland city in the State

of New York which is supplied with water from a river that flows near it. The method is as follows. In a small house on the bank of the river is an engine which goes night and day, pumping water from the stream into the main pipe which leads to the city. The demand in the city regulates the motion of the engine, so that, the more water is drawn off, the faster the engine goes. But when a fire occurs, someone in the city touches a spring, which rings a bell in the engine-room; on hearing which the engineer in charge, by the turning of a lever, causes the engine to move with such rapidity as to charge the mains to their greatest capacity, so that when the hose is attached to the plugs, water is sent to the top of the loftiest building in the place. *Thus an extraordinary demand is met through the ordinary channels*<sup>†</sup>." X

Now if consciousness in plants and animals is, however faintly, the same consciousness that wells up in ourselves; immense as may seem the gulf that now separates them, is the great transformation that must have taken place in passing from the one to the other impossible without the intervention of a miraculous new creative act? Is it a difference of kind or only of degree? Is it any whit more wondrous than the transformation between plant or animal instinct and human reason<sup>‡</sup>? X

<sup>†</sup> Schaff; in his article on prayer, proving how God can answer prayers for rain without a miracle or new creative act.

<sup>‡</sup> We are afraid that this last sentence will greatly invalidate our

Other Evolutionists besides Wallace have long had an inkling that discovered facts were irreconcilable with the purely mechanical application of the law of evolution: that the theory of natural selection and of the inheritance of acquired faculties does not explain everything. They have realized the presence of a "something mysterious within" plants and animals which disturbed their calculations. Kerner ("Flowers") writes: "External conditions *per se* can neither determine the development of an organ, nor its abortion." He insists that from within, out of the secret heart of the plant, comes the controlling and directing force.

Even Ch. Darwin recognized the same thing in birds. He writes to Huxley: "You have cleverly hit upon one point, which has greatly troubled me: if, as I think, external conditions produce little *direct* effect, what the devil determines each particular variation?"

So clearly has the value of this mysterious interior force as alone determining the whole organization been realized in modern days, that Prof. Church has coined the word *Directivity* for it. "Directivity is no 'force,' it is merely a characteristic of all life." It expresses the great truth that any changes

plea in the eyes of many. For its justification we must refer our readers to pp. 177—188, or Chapter VI., Part II. We do not for one moment wish to degrade reason; but we do wish to trace it to its one Divine Source, the Universal Consciousness, God, as we attempt to prove in that section.

the organism may exhibit are first in the germ out of which the organism has sprung, and that the germinal matter itself is determined by 'mental' rather than by 'physical' causes<sup>h</sup>." The germ determines the organic structure: the controlling creative force within the heart of the organism, i.e. its soul, fashions the germ.

What Christ says of the human character, that it is "from within, out of the heart of man" that proceeds its good and its evil, far more than "from without," from the external surroundings; that character is the child of the secret bias of the soul; this, strange to say, is also the last word of modern thought in the matter of organic evolution.

If this is the case even with the lower organisms, how much more will it be true of man, the crown of evolution! The old mechanical doctrine of evolution, which does not even apply to the lowest forms of life, here utterly breaks down.

"Our consciousness," says Henri Bergson<sup>i</sup>, "is essentially a self-directing creative consciousness. Under its directivity, our existence is an unbroken process of self-adaptation to an equally unbroken

<sup>h</sup> Prof. Henslow, who shows that "even if chemists could achieve the feat of making protoplasm, it by no means follows that the phenomena of life will burst forth from it. Living protoplasm can be killed, yet remain chemically the same, while its directivity has gone with its life."

<sup>i</sup> Henri Bergson, "Evolution Créatrice"; cf. Tyrrell's admirable essay on it.

process of change in a surrounding environment with which our own existence is continuous as a part is akin to its whole. In this process of conscious self-change, each moment swallows up and yet retains all the preceding moments in a fuller form of existence by a veritable act of creation. This creation, or invention, is not caused by the sum-total of preceding acts, though it rests on them and refashions them. Our existence, directed by consciousness, is a sort of self-rolling snowball determining its own direction according to the new exigencies of each moment. . . . No two moments of our real life can ever be perfectly alike. However conditioned by preceding results, each fresh moment of that life imports a new element of creative invention which gives to the whole moment a character of originality which no human knowledge of the antecedents, however infinite, could possibly foresee."

If we have made out our case, if this is as scientifically true as we believe it to be, then the facts of life are utterly irreconcilable with the purely mechanical application of evolution now in vogue. We cannot say that everything is irrevocably determined for us by the inexorable Laws of Nature which uniformly hold good in the inorganic world. Man's life and actions cannot thus be summarily dealt with as if we were so many crystals; and materialism breaks down.

Consciousness, self-directing creative consciousness, must be taken into our reckoning as the Power behind evolution which gives it its *raison d'être*. The Consciousness of God, the consciousness of man, the Universal Consciousness everywhere, this is the all-important First Cause which gives birth to the "second causes" of scientists.

The Laws of Nature and Evolution are a useful and beautiful system of interpretable signs, but, after all, they are only a series of sequences or methods according to which the Conscious Power, that controls and pervades the Universe, works. "All is one scheme, and God is the meaning of it."

All said and done, we must come back to Bacon's maxim, which evolutionists have in a manner reversed, "A little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion:—for while the mind of man looketh upon second causes scattered, it may sometimes rest in them, and go no farther; but when it beholdeth the chain of them confederate, it must needs fly to Providence and Deity."

We do not quote this passage in a spirit of bitterness, neither do we apply Bacon's injurious epithet "atheists" to our critics. The *odium theologicum* has passed into a proverb, and nothing can possibly be more damaging to the cause of truth than the passion and bitterness of theologians contrasted with the philosophic calm of scientific men.

Nothing is further from our minds. We sincerely

admire and respect Agnostics for conscientiously refusing to accept any conclusions which are not ratified by Reason on the evidence of verified facts, the only reality they know. In very many instances, as was the case with G. J. Romanes, their hearts are all the while crying out for the living God, but they cannot see their way to follow their heart-promptings where their intellects cannot find any foothold at all.

On the other hand, they will equally respect us for not being able to rest in a creed which, to our minds, leaves out of its calculation the most vital fact in the Universe.

*Note.*

Too late to insert in the text, now that the MS. is in the press, we have just read Mr. F. Darwin's plea for the old doctrine of the inheritance of acquired faculties. "I am told by psychologists that I must define my point of view. I am accused of occupying the unscientific position known as 'sitting on the fence.' It is said that, like other biologists, I try to pick out what suits my purpose from two opposite schools of thought—the psychological and the physiological. What I claim is that, as regards reaction to environment, a plant and a man must be placed in the same great class, in spite of the obvious fact that, as regards complexity of behaviour, the difference between them is enormous. I am not a psychologist, and I am not bound to give an opinion as to how far the occurrence of definite actions in response to stimulus is a physiological, and how far it is a psychological problem. I am



told that I have no right to assume the neural series of changes to be the cause of the psychological series, though I am allowed to say that neural changes are the universal concomitants of psychological change. This seems to me, in my ignorance, an unsatisfactory position. I find myself obliged to believe that the mnemonic quality in all living things (which is proved to exist by direct experiment) must depend on physical changes in protoplasm, and that it is therefore permissible to use these changes as a notation in which the phenomena of habit must be expressed."

In its leader on the President's Address at the recent meeting of the British Association at Dublin, 1908, the *Times* writes: "Of the special thesis of the President's address, the operation of certain stimuli compelling plants to execute certain movements or temporary changes of shape, and the corresponding permanent or morphological changes; of the dim beginnings of habits, and 'unconscious memory' in plants and animals, few even among botanists are qualified to speak; it all belongs to a province only lately opened to research. The few who have studied these obscure problems are at variance as to facts and explanations. They agree only as to the questions to be asked. *Mr. Darwin's address is avowedly in large part only a chain of highly ingenious hypotheses. His mnemonic principle or quality in all living things, each action leaving its effect on the organism, each generation 'mnemically' connected with the next, must be supplemented by hypotheses which have for the inquirer their justification, but which are still unverified*<sup>k</sup>."

<sup>k</sup> The italics are our own.—J. R. C.



CHAPTER VI. PART II.

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SCIENTIFIC OBJECTIONS EXAMINED  
(CONTINUED).

## *Argument.*

A. HUMAN reason incompetent to deal with moral and spiritual life - problems. Reason itself is as much the creature and servant of consciousness or soul as the human eye or ear. How consciousness has called into being all our faculties. Illustration. Proofs from modern biology. The soul created reason originally as its instrument for life-preserving purposes. Action, not contemplation, reason's *raison d'être*. Mr. Balfour and H. Bergson quoted in support of reason's inadequacy to cope with high matters of life. This evolution of reason does not rob it of its divine Hall-mark ; just the reverse.

"Spiritual things must be spiritually discerned," a scientific and philosophic fact. "To find God, look within," justified. Value of argument from personal, and especially from universal experience. The ultimate criterion of truth based not on observation or experiment, but on "inability to believe otherwise." What this appeal to "moral sense" involves.

B. Hypothetical nature of our plea admitted. Value of hypotheses. Science, no less than religion and every-day practice, is built on faith-ventures.

C. Our views not semi-Pantheism. Remarkable modern scientific recognition of spirit or consciousness. How science corrects its own mistakes, and is our best ally in answering scientific objections, e.g. Science proves that Nature (though and because oft "red in tooth and claw") *does* point to Nature's God ; also efficacy of prayer. For its own sake, Theology must ever welcome science-discoveries.

## CHAPTER VI. PART II.

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### SCIENTIFIC OBJECTIONS EXAMINED (*continued*).

#### A.

HITHERTO we have tried to show that man is more than a mere parcel of matter; he is body plus soul or consciousness. Consciousness is a factor which science dare not ignore, yet call itself scientific, for it is the creative and directive soul within man which shapes his individuality in a way that no merely natural or material analysis can explain. Therefore we contend that the Laws of Nature and the doctrine of Evolution break down when mechanically applied to the solution of the great problem of life.

In this chapter we should like to attempt a bolder flight, and try to prove that S. Paul's words "spiritual things are spiritually discerned" is a scientific and philosophical fact; that neither God, man nor life can be known with certainty by the natural light of human reason. In other words, our plea is that, absolutely competent as is the human intelligence to deal with inorganic matter and to grasp the physical laws of the world of matter, it is utterly inadequate, completely out of its province, when it attempts to deal with moral and spiritual life.

“God is a spirit.” Man is a spirit<sup>a</sup>. And by spirit we mean the same thing as “consciousness,” “personality,” “soul.” Now just as it has often been said that “No one but God Himself can know God as He really is” and “the creature cannot understand its Creator,” so it is with the human intelligence. Reason is as much the creature, the product of our consciousness as is the human eye or ear. It is the spirit or soul within us that has called reason into being; and we believe that the whole trend of modern thought is daily more and more endorsing S. Paul’s words, “for what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God”<sup>b</sup>.

In a word, if we want to get a real knowledge of man, if we wish to grapple with the great problem which is now occupying all thinking minds, “What is this consciousness human and Divine?” we must arrive at our answer intuitively. The spirit within us must supply that answer: and it is ever trying to give us our cue; but our eyes are holden, and our ears dull so that we only grasp here a little, there a little of the message it gives us.

<sup>a</sup> A valued critic suggests “man *has* a spirit.” But surely when we say “man has a soul” we speak of a totally different relationship from that implied when we say “man *has* a body.” Our true self is identical with the former, certainly not with the latter (our mere clothing), and our language should express this difference.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 11, 12; cf. Hastings’ *Dictionary of the Bible*, iv. 612, art. “*Spirit*.”

There is an immortal centre in us all,

Where truth abides in fulness.

All around, wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in.

Pent in a finite body, the spirit within us ever yearns to express, to realize itself, but it has got to do it through us. Therefore, by its very nature essentially creative, inventive, it has called into being faculties through which it can realize itself under its present bodily conditions, adapt itself perfectly to its actual environment. So it has come about that the organs of sight and sound, human reason itself,—the soul's most perfect instrument of expression and self-realization,—are the creations, the inventions of the spirit of man within him.

Let us try and make our meaning a little clearer. We know now that such sensations as sound, luminousness, perfume are only vibrations. They have no objective reality apart from the sensations produced in us. In the words of a keen thinker: "You hear the boom of a big bell, and you imagine that the bell is making the sound. It is not. It is only causing vibrations. It is *you* who manufacture the vibrations into sound. Vibrations of air and ether existed millions of years before there was an eye or an ear. These vibrations were an external factor in developing these important organs; but only as the auditory nerve was evolved was there sound; only as the optical apparatus was evolved was there luminousness; only as the sense of smell

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X

was evolved, was there fragrance." Without consciousness and the organs through which consciousness is differentiated into sensations, there would be no sound and no hearing ; no luminousness and no seeing ; no fragrance and no smelling.

Now how does consciousness bring this about? In precisely the same way as the heart, the "psychic something," the consciousness, if you will, of a plant, bird or any other organism acts under similar circumstances. Prof. Henslow so admirably expresses what we mean that we venture to quote him at some length: "The moment a striking change of environment occurs, at that moment the inherent forces in protoplasm and the nucleus begin to adapt themselves by response to their new surroundings; to build up new cells and tissues quite different from those made up to that moment. Thus, if a water-plant be growing up submerged, but reaches the surface of the water and then grows into the air, the whole anatomy at once changes at the water-level. Similarly, in animals, the wool of a sheep of temperate regions becomes silky in hot ones; and the paddle-like limbs, adapted for swimming, of animals that live in water are due to the same cause. In the inorganic world we discover something of the kind, but of a very different quality: in crystals, for instance. But there the same results so mechanically and uniformly follow, under the same conditions, that a chemist can tell beforehand what will be those results: whereas it is not so with the



results of the creative self-directing consciousness. Its power not only of making the organic cell reproduce a cell like itself, but of changing the form according to requirement, has no parallel either in the inorganic world or in the manufactories of man."

Thus it was that the creative consciousness within us created the eye and the ear to enable it to interpret the vibrations in the environment. And this creative act consciousness works as intuitively and naturally as a foot makes an impression of itself on wet sand. It is the instinctive result of the soul's creative genius to realize itself by adaptation in response to new surroundings.

So with the evolution of human intelligence. If it is true, as Wallace, and, we fancy, most modern thinkers maintain, that we are evolved from the lower animals, then the whole of our bodily structure, the brain included, is the creation of the self-directing consciousness gradually realizing itself by adaptation in response to environment. The animal, at first, in its lowest form absorbs its food almost as automatically as certain plants close their leaves over an insect that has alighted thereon, and absorb it. But as the body of the animal is developed in complexity by the action of complex forces, certain grey lumps of matter make their appearance within its structure, and out of these the consciousness within, which has called them into being, forms its best instrument for its self-realization. Through these grey cells or brain, it quickens into life the body

which clothes the soul ; so that the animated parcel of matter becomes aware that it is alive, has an appetite, and that other animals have an appetite for it. The mind is thus the handmaiden of the consciousness, its creator. The reason is a faculty subordinate to the soul, the instrument of the soul which gave it birth.

This mind, though at first feeble and contracted, gradually developed. There is an immense gulf between the first glimmering of reason in the lowest organisms and human intelligence, yet even here we can draw no hard and fast line. Probably, the greatest step in brain-evolution was taken when one of our animal ancestors formed the habit of assuming the erect posture. "This carried with it not only modifications of structure, but what was far more important, a consequent extraordinary and unprecedented expansion of mental powers. True, this was even yet only an animal intelligence, but so keen and true did it soon become, as to fix a gulf between this anthropoid ape and his fellows and to place him in a position among them of indisputable supremacy. He was now ripe for the vast change which was to revolutionize his whole mental and moral structure, and by which the great upward step from brute to man was to be accomplished<sup>b</sup>."

But what must be insisted on over and over again is Tyndall's "between brain-action and

<sup>b</sup> Dr. Beveridge.

consciousness there is an impassable chasm." True, the brain came into existence at the bidding of consciousness by adaptation in response to external surroundings, but these external surroundings would of themselves never have produced it. X

It was the vital effort, the *élan*, as Bergson well calls it, of the soul within that created intelligence in animals, the human reason in man, so that the soul might interpret those vibrations of sound, luminousness, perfume, and the other *stimuli* impinging on that parcel of matter, the body, wherein it dwells. Reason could naturally only come into being after the other and lower faculties, for its *raison d'être* is to interpret their message. It is subsequent to them in point of time, but as immeasurably above them in quality and value as man is superior to an anemone. The other faculties are its servants, but it is itself the handmaiden of the soul. The soul created reason as its instrument to enable it to translate the things that are seen, and felt, and heard into the reality that lies at the background of these outward sensations. X

Our whole plea lies here. Human intelligence is necessary to the soul in its quest for the reality that is ever behind the things that are apparent to our senses; it supplies all the requisite data for the soul to interpret, but it is the soul and not the reason which establishes for us the reality, probes right down to the root of the whole matter, and gives us the key to the Universe-problem. And

this, we firmly believe, is what S. Paul meant by his "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." These words of his, together with his other saying, "what man knoweth the things of man, save the spirit of man which is in him?" seem to prove that he already saw, by the light of the Holy Spirit, what we are only darkly feeling after even now.

To sum up. We have suggested that the consciousness or soul is the helmsman within us with his hand ever on the tiller; that in this immortal centre, which constitutes our true self, the log of life is kept. Through all the changes and chances of our mortal life our soul abides ever one and the same. It, and it alone, binds all our experience tightly together and makes our life-experiences a connected whole. More than this, our soul is a moral practical soul with an ideal of self-realization ever present before it as its final goal. While in this body pent, it knows itself as a possibility still unrealized, a promise unfulfilled<sup>c</sup>. So long as it is imprisoned in the house of the body, "the transpar-

<sup>c</sup> It is this very dissatisfaction of the soul with itself which constitutes one of the chief arguments for its immortality. God is its Source, God its goal. Man is now soul *plus* body, but a material body is no essential part of man's true self. "If a man is shut up in a house," says M'Taggart, "the transparency of the windows is an essential condition of his seeing the sky. But it would not be prudent to infer that, if he walked out of the house, he could not see the sky because there was no longer any glass through which he might see it." A Resurrection of the Body there will be. Some vehicle or mode of manifestation we must have if we are to remain

ency of the windows" is an essential condition of its seeing clearly things outside, therefore it has created our senses and faculties, and made reason its chief bodily eye, to enable it to realize itself.

We have said that the soul is practical, and it created reason with a practical aim. In the first instance, at any rate, the end of life is living, and not thinking. Indeed, thinking is itself determined by the needs of life; so the main original purpose of intelligence was a purpose of action, not contemplation. In the struggle for existence, the *raison d'être* of intelligence was at first merely to supply ways and means of self-preservation. The same thing holds good even now. Human reason is still mainly practical, for to-day "man's action on the world is ultimately limited by the extent to which he knows how to break it up into pieces, move them about, and put them together again in more convenient combinations. His intelligence is shaped for this sort of knowledge: it is truly at home with the inert, the solid, the divisible, the measurable. Its concepts are formed on this model: its logic triumphant only in Geometry" (Bergson).

If this is true; if reason is but one of the faculties or instruments devised and created by consciousness

our true real individual selves, and not be absorbed completely into God. But, as Sir Oliver Lodge well shows, not one atom of the material body will there be in the heavenly body in which we shall be clothed. All material bodies imply resistance, and Christ passed through closed doors after His Resurrection. S. Paul's words on the subject point to the same conclusion.

for but one of its services ; if, moreover, its one main purpose is a purely practical purpose, self-preservation in the struggle for existence, how can it possibly be adequate to cope with the reality which lies behind the things that are seen? The things that are seen, the world of matter and of action, this it can understand. This is what it was created for, for this it was born. Reason can sort and classify visible phenomena; it can even detect a certain uniformity of sequence between certain antecedents and certain consequents, an uniformity which it calls the law of cause and effect. But as soon as it quits its proper world of matter and action, and, applying its mechanical categories of causation to the problem of life, tries to dethrone its master and creator consciousness, and usurp the soul's true function, it hopelessly fails.

Reason is a good servant, but only a manual servant after all. In its own sphere, it is a most faithful and profitable servant. In the inorganic world it *is* in touch with something akin to reality<sup>d</sup>, and interprets this portion of reality more or less truly, therefore its triumphs there have been immense. Where human intelligence is at fault is in

<sup>d</sup> Strictly, matter has no reality. "If conscious life is a rolling snow-ball, inorganic matter is a rolling-stone, a movement of failure, decay, undoing; a falling to pieces of the laborious products of creative effort" (Tyrrell on "Bergson"). Really, all that *is* is the self-utterance of Consciousness; an organic *whole*, not a mechanical mass; spiritual, not material; a "World of Thought-relations." (cf. T. H. Green.)

endeavouring to leave the things that are seen, and interpret the things that are not seen, to grasp the supra-corporeal in terms of the corporeal. There it is going far beyond its true province and capacity, and its knowledge naturally becomes merely apparent and relative. In Bacon's phrase: "it builds a universal philosophy on a few experiments."

Mr. Balfour has laid stress on this point. In his Congress address, he cleverly pointed out that the materialist assumption that reason is an evolved faculty is utterly inconsistent with the use made of reason by naturalism. True, Mr. Balfour insists on the Divine origin of reason, but his logical argument, *mutatis mutandis*, supports our contention. "If the naturalistic origin of reason is true, then it is an utterly inadequate reason, and its inadequacy must be evident, and most of all to the man of science himself, for this reason and on these grounds, that if reason be only the product of irrational and mechanical causes going back to some illimitable past, reaching forward to some illimitable future, and accidentally, in the course of that endless chain, producing for a brief moment in the history of the Universe a few individuals capable of understanding the world in which we live, *what confidence can you place in reason if you use it for any purpose beyond the merely life-preserving or race-preserving qualities for which alone, on this theory, it was brought into existence.*" (Address to Pan-Anglican Congress.)

We need not point out to readers who have read our pages thus far that, in principle, our own view of the human reason and Mr. Balfour's tally, though he would naturally dissent from our theory of its origin. We do not degrade reason by making it the child of the God within us. We do believe in the evolution of reason, but our conception of it has nothing else in common with what Mr. Balfour rightly calls "the mechanical and irrational" theory of its origin, as held by materialists. To us, as the creation of God's image within us, the human intelligence bears the Divine hall-mark. Here as ever, our view of evolution is an Evolution which has a God of Love as the driving-power behind it.

Our sole contention is that a faculty itself evolved by consciousness, for one of the services of the soul in its quest after self-realization, is and must be the soul's subordinate and cannot dethrone its master or usurp its creator's functions.

As Bergson and Mr. Tyrrell forcibly express it: "Intelligence cannot lift itself above itself by its own waistband." In dealing with inert matter our reason reaches its maximum of clearness, even as it finds its minimum at the opposite pole of the spiritual, the conscious, the living. It can, indeed, deal with the living only so far as this presents some of the aspects of the dying.

"But," it may be objected, "are you not proving too much? If human reason cannot understand



consciousness either human or Divine, do not your premises, driven to their only logical conclusion, land us in Agnosticism as our only reasonable attitude ? ”

Yes, if there were no alternative. But is there none? Is it not possible to get a real knowledge of the living, the conscious, the spiritual in another way? “Spiritual things are spiritually discerned,” says S. Paul. “If you would find God, look within,” said a philosopher of old ; was it Plato? This, again, S. Paul echoes : “Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? or who shall descend into the deep? For the word of God is nigh thee, even in thine heart.”

It is true that, constituted as we are, truth, the truth which abides in all its fulness in the soul, is not, cannot be true to us finite beings, half soul and half matter, till our human intelligence has ratified its conclusions, but it was not the human reason that prompted this revelation of the Truth, but the light of the spirit indwelling within us.

We believe that modern philosophy fully bears this out. “Intelligence cannot lift itself above itself by its own waistband” : in other words, reason can no more grasp consciousness than water can rise above its own level. Philosophy demands the whole field of consciousness fully to grasp Consciousness. But are we not parts of the Universal Consciousness? Do we not bear His image and witness within ourselves? Surely, then, *there*,

in our own soul, in our true self and its spiritual experience, must be our one point of departure.

May we found nothing on this testimony of the soul? Is its witness to the Source whence it came and with Whom it is essentially at one, of no value? Both science and religion appeal to experience, is the spiritual experience not of one person but of tens of thousands to go for nothing? Is such evidence worthless? "Yes!" the scientist replies, "it is worthless. It possesses nothing of scientific objective value. These spiritual experiences of yours may be of great personal value to you, but they give you no warrant for stepping outside your own feelings. They may be useful illusions in their place, but you must outgrow them. All so-called knowledge of the Universal Consciousness, call Him God or what you will, must, like all other knowledge, be submitted to the test of observation and experiment. If it is knowledge at all it is capable of verification, and the verdict of science must be final. If you fall back on your own experience, you may land anywhere."

This sounds so plausible, and there are so many religious people nowadays who have such a dread of pietism, that this argument often carries with it far more weight than it deserves. Accept it, and in time we shall become the victims of that intellectualism which, in the long run, means spiritual atrophy to the soul. Such a theory as science here advances is precisely that dethroning of the

soul and allowing the reason to usurp its place, the subordination of the master to his servant, against which both religion and philosophy are bound to protest.

If S. Paul is wrong in insisting that the Truth is in our own hearts, then all human knowledge is a delusion. Trace our knowledge in any department far enough back, and whence comes our ultimate belief in the truthfulness of our convictions? When our intellect, or our moral sense, points to a truth, why do we believe that it is a truth, and not a mere figment of our own minds? Is it not because we feel, we know that there is something within us, which intuitively apprehends the true when it is presented to it, and impels us to accept it as well by a force which we can neither evade nor resist and yet remain true to ourselves? "There is apparently," says Prof. Goldwin Smith, "no ultimate criterion of truth, either physical or moral, except our inability, constituted as we are, to believe otherwise."

This "something within us," which sets its seal to the truth and thus makes it true for us, we call the "moral sense": it is really the verdict of our soul or consciousness. There, in our immortal centre, dwells the Truth. "It takes no rise from outward things, whate'er we may believe;" it is because it lies there within ourselves in the soul, that we believe in the truthfulness of our other faculties, of reason itself, its servants. If its testi-

mony is not true, then the whole of our superstructure of knowledge and belief falls to the ground.

Even granting that the spiritual experience of any one individual man may not unreasonably be called subjective, emotional, untrustworthy; can we speak thus disparagingly of the long list of "saints and worthies" who assure us that in prayer and a close walk with God their "soul athirst for God" has slaked its thirst at the Fountain-Head, and gained the fulfilment of its deepest spiritual needs? Is the argument from the universal experience of countless multitudes of men in all ages and climes also to go for nothing?

Sceptics reply: "Yes! They said, nay, they believed that God had quickened their soul into active life and guided them by His Holy Spirit into all truth: but they were mistaken. It is a beautiful dream, yet a mere delusion."

Now to deny all weight to the argument from universal experience places us on the horns of a dilemma. Prof. Goldwin Smith's maxim, "there is apparently no ultimate criterion of truth, either physical or moral, except our inability, constituted as we are, to believe otherwise," must be either true or false.

If true, we cannot reasonably make our own "inability to believe otherwise" the criterion of truth in our own case, and yet refuse to recognize its

validity in the case of other men. This would be to assume that we personally are unique among men; and we very much doubt whether any man would adopt this conclusion when thus nakedly stated. Yet the denial of all argumentative weight to the general belief of mankind involves no less than this.

On the other hand, if "inability to believe otherwise" is no criterion of truth, then this view inevitably lands us in absolute scepticism. If we deny all significance to the fact of human belief, individually or collectively, we must deny all significance to the fact of our own belief. We cannot logically exclude ourselves from the verdict which we pass upon mankind generally.

Some argumentative weight must, therefore, be assigned to the universal experience of mankind unless we are prepared to undermine the first principles of all human knowledge altogether. The only alternative is either dogmatic self-assertion or absolute scepticism.

We are well aware that not unfrequently men give an indolent assent to this assertion or that, they are too ignorant or lazy to "buy the truth" for themselves at the cost of hard thought, so they get it from others on authority, and follow a popular leader like a flock of sheep. But when there is a general agreement in times present and in times past on a vital matter, when the question is of such a nature that a right decision is of supreme

importance, very few will venture to assert that all those minds who accepted this common belief blindly adopted it without carefully weighing both sides of the question.

Therefore to be told that not one or two, but hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of good men, not of one age or temperament or clime, but in every age, of every temperament, in every clime, have been deceived, is to be asked to believe a wonder far more incredible than any fairy-tale. More than this, if the testimony of seers, prophets, psalmists, saints, confessors, martyrs, and of the whole Church of God is all to go for nothing, may God help us to share their delusion, for it has been a glorious make-believe, and the force by which most of the best work of the world has been done.

This is why, when scientists tell us that "all so-called knowledge of God must, like all other knowledge, be submitted to the tests of observation and experiment: if it is knowledge at all, it is capable of verification, and the verdict of science on the subject must be final," we decline to accept their statement as final.

"If I am not to be an absolute Pyrrhonist," writes Dr. Forsyth, "if I am not to doubt everything, and renounce my own reality, I must find my starting-point and my practical certainty in that which founds my moral life, in my own spiritual experience. The test of all philosophy is ethical conviction."

"Pure and undiluted subjectivity!" exclaim our critics. Not so, if God dwells in us and in His Universe at all. We may be sure that we derive from Him whatever is good in ourselves, and, still more, whatever is best. The stream cannot rise above its source, nor the creature above his Creator. "He Who reflects upon Himself," says Plotinus, "reflects upon his own original, and finds the clearest impression of the eternal nature and perfect Being stamped upon his own soul."

Therefore, in adopting as our motto "to find God, look within," we are making not our own subjectivity, but the Divine Consciousness within us speak. "The light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world" is our illuminating guide into all Truth, and this, we insist, must be our point of departure. Our soul gives us, as it were, a flash-light picture of the truth, a revelation of it,—then, but only then, reason, the soul's handmaid, steps in and interprets its meaning.

So it is that, in a sense, man can know God even apart from the Bible or the perfect Revelation of God in Christ. God has not left Himself without a witness even in the most benighted days of heathen darkness, as S. Paul clearly points out. We Christians maintain that we have a far greater Light than this to lighten our darkness, that God has manifestly revealed Himself to us as He actually is. But if all appeal to the Bible is inadmissible, then, it is to the soul within, and not to human

intelligence that we must look for our guidance. In our spirit and our spiritual experience we must find our starting-point.

## B.

It may be asked: "In your attempt to establish Faith on a scientific basis, have you attained that definiteness and certainty which the modern rigorous methods, historical and scientific, you so often extol, demand? Have you not made many faith-ventures? In short, is there not much in your arguments which is still in the twilight of pure hypothesis?"

We readily admit the reasonableness of this plea. So long as all appeals to Christ and the Bible are barred, the foundations of our religion must rest on a basis which may be shaken. Our clearly-defined Faith as Christians, at one with God through Christ and dwelling in the full light of the Holy Spirit, is one thing; the vague twilight of purely natural religion is quite another.

But, even granting that hypotheses enter largely into any solution of the Universe-Problem from the religious man's point of view, is not the same thing just as true of Science? Is it not one of the chief distinctions of the leaders of Science that year by year, and generation by generation, they are ever framing new and more adequate hypotheses to account for the phenomena of the Universe, and so bringing them closer and closer to the facts they are intended to cover and explain?



Behind these phenomena of the Universe, Science and Religion alike recognize that there is a reality in the background which ever remains the same, through all the changes; a reality which seems to demand omniscience to interpret it. Science is attempting to solve this problem, so is Religion. Each side has framed many a hypothesis or plausible guess. Each new hypothesis is, we believe, bringing us nearer to the Truth, but the problem (if we put Revelation out of court) is still far from solved. Both Science and Religion have to confess that "their little systems have their day, and cease to be," yet the reality which we cannot fathom, but of which both sides are ever giving a more and more adequate account, abides unchanged. It is only our present hypothetical and incomplete solutions of the problem that are fluid and provisional.

Far from hypotheses being valueless, Science itself cannot possibly dispense with them. They are the indispensable pioneers of truth, clearly pointing out in what direction the goal lies, though they may not reach it themselves. So long as a hypothesis acknowledges that its conclusions are as yet avowedly based on insufficient evidence to admit of absolute verification, its value is immense. It suggests new lines of inquiry, and affords a clear and connected view of known facts till a better hypothesis uses it as a stepping-stone and leads to a still clearer conception of the truth.

As rational beings we daily act, and must act on

hypotheses or assumptions every hour of our lives. We discard or retain them as our experience verifies or refutes them. It is only by formulating hypothesis after hypothesis that science has achieved its triumphs and made modern civilization possible.

X Huxley pointed out that the very foundation-stone of science,—the Uniformity of Nature—is a most probable, yet an unverifiable hypothesis. Be this as it may, the modern nebular theory ; and the assumption that life, matter and solar systems existed from all eternity, are confessedly mere hypotheses<sup>e</sup>.

The difference between religion and science is not that one uses hypotheses while the other is able to discard them. They both make large use of provisional assumptions. Their difference lies in the fact that the subject-matter of science is necessarily more simple than that of religion. Therefore, the verification of the postulates of religion is a very much more complex and difficult problem.

Let us make our meaning clearer. The facts of science are natural facts, e.g. that water will seek its own level, that a stone falls to the ground each successive moment with increased velocity ; the facts of religion are moral facts, e.g. that man is a moral being, with a purpose and a destiny.

Science deals with matters of fact, religion with judgments of value : Science sees a "cosmos" or ordered whole in the phenomena which fall within

<sup>e</sup> cf. Supplemental Note to Chapter VI., Part I. (*sub. fin.*).

its province: we see a "cosmos" in the facts which fall within ours, and we maintain that our moral facts are as real every whit as the scientific facts.

More than this, we believe that as regards purely scientific facts it is often possible to assume a perfectly sceptical attitude without any evil consequences accruing to ourselves. e.g. "Is the nebular theory true? are atoms irreducible?" But in moral questions we cannot act as if it did not matter whether we believed or disbelieved. The question at issue is too practical, fraught with consequences of vital importance to our well-being; e.g. "Is there a God? am I a mere ephemeral bubble or an immortal soul?"

So it comes about that not only is the subject-matter of religion far more complex than that of science, and, therefore, necessarily far more difficult of solution, and offering a wider field for hypothesis, but it is far more real, more vital in its practical importance, and a decision of some kind we must reach on the questions it sets before us. We cannot afford to be neutral. Men's very lives depend upon the answer they adopt for their guidance.

This holds true of all the practical departments of human life. "In politics, medicine, business,—in every sphere of man's activity, man has to make his faith-venture. If we were to wait until all possibility of a mistake has passed, before making up our minds to act, we should never act at all. This inaction would be the worst kind of action.


It would be deliberately closing the doors of possible experience which our faith-venture might have opened for us, and so precluding the possibility of the very knowledge in the name of which our faith-venture is invoked.—Is man a mere passing phenomenon, or is he an immortal Spirit? Is there in us a spark of the Eternal which links us to the Unseen Source of all life? Science cannot say. We have to make our ultimate decision. There is no positive evidence at hand clear enough to compel assent. Religion, reaching forth into a sphere where reason's vision cannot penetrate, makes her faith-venture, lays hold by faith upon the object of her hope, and by the power of her undying ideal, enables us to live and die as those who are the heirs of an immortal destiny. Such an attitude is not irrational; on the contrary, it is most worthy of a man of reason, and thus far the faith of religion may be justified at the bar of science." (*Dr. Adams Brown.*)

## C.

We have little more to add. On its own merits our argument must stand or fall. We know that we do not offer a system logically complete or always uniform. No man can entirely escape from himself. Try as he will to be free from prejudices, each one of us has his idiosyncrasies which for him gain their attractiveness from his peculiar temper, his surroundings, his occupation, his education, and unconsciously cheat and bias his mind. We have,

therefore, more than a subconscious suspicion that although we have conscientiously endeavoured to meet scientific objections on purely scientific grounds, we have nevertheless read much into God's Universe which we should never have found there had not our own spirit been steeped in Holy Writ and the psychology of a S. Paul.

Acting on the principle that every writer should fearlessly teach up to the level of his own convictions, we have here ventured to express our own moral and spiritual view of the Universe-problem. It is the bounden duty of our critics to point out its defects in the same spirit. Many will see in our pages a semi-pantheistic philosophy. If so, the fault is our own; our feeble words have utterly and signally failed to express our heart-convictions. This we certainly have in common with Pantheism, we assure man, as it does, of his real union with the source of his own and the universal life,—and we believe all true religion must thus far coincide with the creed of the Pantheist. But here we once and for all part company with Pantheism. Our God is not merely a fine name for the Universe, but a Transcendent as well as Immanent God, a real First Cause, a Person, and the Divine Incarnation is for us a supreme fact. “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth: and in Jesus Christ our Lord.” We assert God's Presence in His works: we do not identify Him with them. Our one aim has been to preach on the text, “In



Him we live, and move, and have our being. We are His offspring," or, in the words we have so often quoted, "the Universe is one whole and God is the meaning of it."

We do believe that it is possible to co-ordinate all the facts of human experience, all the phenomena which the Universe presents everywhere to our view, with the deepest truths of the human soul: we believe that we interpret the Kingdom of Nature truly only when we realize that it is the Kingdom of God. "The Unity of Nature is but the scientific expression of the Christian doctrine of the Unity of God." Even Science is beginning to recognize this.

In his sermon before the British Association (Dublin, 1908), the Dean of S. Patrick's truly said, "Truth is one: the avenues by which it is reached are manifold. To-day, it is not too much to say that the *idola* of a materialistic philosophy have lost their attractiveness for the best minds amongst us. It is beginning to be recognised that the mysteries of Nature are not completely explained by the researches of the laboratory, and that the problems of human life and thought are not solved when we have exhibited the history of man's origin and of his development from humbler species. The deepest problem which man has to deal with is the problem of man's spirit, and this is beginning to be recognized by the science of to-day<sup>†</sup>."

<sup>†</sup> The text of this chapter was written many months before the

Even as early as 1873 Charles Darwin wrote: "The impossibility of conceiving that this great and wondrous universe arose through chance, seems to me the chief argument for the existence of God." Scientific thought has travelled far since then. At one time it seemed as if science were seeking to rob us of all that we had been taught to look upon as sacred, and endeavouring to shatter man's Faith to fragments. Then as now scientists were honest seekers after Truth, and with eyes fixed upon their ultimate goal, discouraged by no hostile voices, patiently, painfully, self-denyingly they pursued their way. Now it is we who reap the reward of their long years of struggle and labour.

Truth is one and can never fail. It is only a partial view of the Truth that can be shaken. Science has corrected its own mistakes, and, if we are to judge by the general trend of modern scientific thought, even of science it is true that "a little philosophy inclineth men's minds to atheism; but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion. For while the mind of man looketh upon second causes scattered, it may sometimes rest in them, and go no further; but when it beholdeth the chain of them confederate and linked together, it must needs fly to Providence and Deity."

British Association met, but this sermon of the Dean of S. Patrick's so exactly echoes the tenor of the views expressed in our pages that, in this section, we have inserted several extracts from his address at the last moment.

Science has not reached this final stage, its solution of the problem is still too incomplete, its verified evidence insufficient, but its conclusions are daily pointing more and more in this direction.

We have said that science has helped us to correct its own mistakes. One or two instances may help to make our point clearer.

Time was, and this not long ago, when science ridiculed the religious idea that Nature pointed up to Nature's God, and revealed a God of Love. Scientists laughed such views to scorn, and told us that our theory of a benign God was flatly contradicted by the earthquakes and catastrophes of Nature. They assured us that those who believed in a God of Love must deliberately close their eyes to the facts of life, or garble the Universe to suit their theory; that we must judge a tree by its fruit, and judge of the Maker by what He has made. "Read Nature's Book," said they, "and you will see that she reveals not a kind Father, but a stern step-mother, and that there is, at least, as much evil as good, as much cruelty as kindness in the world of Nature."

Science spoke then in all honesty, on the strength of the evidence that lay before her; she has accumulated a mass of further evidence since then, and as honestly recants her former verdict.

True, now as ever, Nature is often "red in tooth and claw"; often uncompromising, imperative, terrible; knowing nothing of indulgence, making no



concessions to ignorance, folly or weakness; insisting on obedience to her laws and forthwith wiping out all who dare to set themselves in opposition to her arrangements; a stern step-mother indeed. Yet scientists themselves now assure us that Nature's severity, everywhere discernible, is not malevolent, but benign. Her action is to save, to heighten, to perfect.

In our day, science, with her watchwords "evolution," "the struggle for existence," and "the survival of the fittest," has given us the key to the problem of "Nature's apparent severity."

We can see now that the struggle, the fiery ordeal, through which Nature makes her children pass, is at bottom merciful; that this apparent evil is a necessary discipline in the training of character and the quest for good. The student of nature knows well to-day that a struggle for existence which demands constant awareness, movement, tension, resistance, endeavour, is the Law of salvation and perfection to the whole animal world.

We see it every day. Give a creature, with a fine organization, an easy pleasant lot, and the process of degeneration instantly sets in: let the conditions again become severe, and the fallen creature begins promptly to recover his glory, provided that "we are not tried above that we are able."

So it is precisely because the law of the world of Nature is not mild and indulgent, but a stern law

calling for exertion, courage, sacrifice ; a Law avenging itself by the annihilation of whatever is ignorant, incapable, weak, or disobedient, that the fittest survive. It is the pull and push, the toil and trial of the "whole creation groaning until now" that has lifted this glorious world out of the mud, filled it with a myriad splendid forms, peopled it with millions of creatures capable of maintaining life and enjoying it withal. The law of life is truly severe which enjoins that man shall eat bread in the sweat of his face, but in the struggle of life our great antagonist is our great helper. Thus alone can we leave barbarism behind us : undergo a magnificent transformation : become princes of God and heirs of all things.

Nature, even as Nature's God, may seem stern, but it is the apparent sternness of Infinite Love.

This is one lesson Science has taught us, and here is another. At one time Science frightened religious minds with her bugbear, the Laws of Nature, assuring us that these Laws were so fixed and inexorable that not even God could alter them, and, therefore, prayer was a waste of breath.

Here again Science has come to our aid, and helped us to correct the false impression she had given us. She had said that God's Laws were so eternally fixed that He Himself was now their slave. Now she has shown us that even man can control and modify the Laws of Nature, and harness them to do his bidding, thus working the miracle science

herself at first asserted God Himself could not work.

To-day this is a miracle man is working every hour. • He rules Nature by obeying her. He has made the lightning his servant and messenger, compelling it to drive his machinery, flood his streets and homes with light, carry his thoughts to the ends of the earth.

At one time, science told us it was as foolish to pray for rain or fine weather as to pray that the sun might not rise to-morrow. Now, she herself has taught us how to modify or increase the rainfall artificially by the extensive destruction or the equally extensive planting of forests. She has taught us even more than this. She has shown us that this planting or destruction of forests has so changed the ground-temperature and surface evaporation, that, over this particular area, the climate is different from what it would otherwise have been. Similarly, by the drainage of the Fens, not only has man reclaimed an enormous amount of land, created plenty where before was want, but, there again, he has so modified the climate that he has produced health and longevity where ague and other ailments incidental to a damp atmosphere previously tended to disease and shortness of life.

So it is that science has answered her own objections to the efficacy of prayer in a way that we never could have done without her aid. She has

taught us that far from it being true that God cannot answer our prayers for rain, health, harvests and other material blessings, man himself can work this miracle. God cannot be a slave to His own Laws of Nature when man, His creature, can so combine and harness them as to make them do His bidding. And it ceases to be the miracle we once thought it to be when we see how simply it is done, without in anywise cancelling, altering or suspending any of Nature's Laws.

As with our prayers for material blessings, so it is with our requests for spiritual graces. This point we have already considered, so it need not delay us long<sup>8</sup>. We have seen the immense influence that man's spirit wields on man's spirit by the sheer force of will and character. The modern science of psychology has clearly established this fact. If in our own human experience, one man, by his mere presence, acts upon us like a bright ray of sunshine, while another blights us as an East wind, cannot God's Spirit in the same manner act on our spirit, and pour His sunshine into our hearts?

Before Science spoke, we instinctively felt that Nature pointed to Nature's God, yet "though His sunshine flashed around us, His storms at times drew near," and in the face of Nature's groaning we were perplexed midst hope and fear. Science,

we have seen, has supplied us with one answer to meet our need and calm our fears.

So, too, with the problem of the efficacy of prayer. At the outset an immature science weakened and overcast, even though it did not destroy, the faith in prayer of some earnest minds who listened to the confident assertions of men whom they rightly honoured for their generous ardour and unselfish devotion in the service of truth. Now, science itself, which began by rudely pushing us from our bended knees, brings us back again to the Throne of Grace more firmly convinced than ever in the efficacy of prayer.

This very discussion on the efficacy of prayer and its reasonableness has been of the greatest service to the Church. It has cleared our minds of much confusion of thought on this important subject, and given us a truer, broader, more spiritual and Scriptural conception of Prayer.

These two instances may suffice to show our heavy indebtedness to science. We should not accept every new speculation as a new gospel, but what is really true for science must be true for theology. God never contradicts Himself, and He speaks as truly in His Book of Nature as in His Bible. For ourselves, we maintain that it is the Incarnation that meets our utmost need; It is the one perfect Revelation which makes life a lucid story, and solves the riddle of the Universe. But gladly do we welcome the advancement of science in its every form

for we firmly believe that, in the long run, it invariably advances the cause and promotes the Kingdom of Him, who is the God of Truth <sup>h</sup>.

<sup>h</sup> cf. Dean of S. Patrick's: "Until we have learnt to welcome and not to disparage the investigations of modern science, we have not recognized either the Unity or the Catholicity of Truth."

## CHAPTER VII.

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ALTERNATIVE CHAPTER TO  
CHAPTER VI.

### *Argument.*

SCIENTIFIC objections briefly recapitulated. Importance of clear *definitions* in argument. Our God *not* the God of Deism, i.e. the semi-materialism of eighteenth-century religion ; nor the God of Pantheism, i.e. pure materialism. Theism defined and shown to be fatal to materialistic objections to prayer.

Laws of Nature defined. Why human beings are both subject and superior to the operation of these Laws. Man can harness these Laws to do his bidding : much more can God do so ; therefore prayers for material benefits are reasonable. The Laws of Nature known to us are "second causes," and themselves depend on superior causes beyond our ken. Miracles defined. History of the "Hospital Test" episode. Its value as a test, *nil*.

Arguments in favour of prayer : (1) The universal prayer-instinct. Instincts more reliable than logic. (2) Argument from universal experience. (3) Argument from Scripture. (4) Argument from *Fatherhood* of God. Is emotion a Divine attribute ? Importance of right views in practical matters. Our views create our world and colour every detail of our life. How Truth is to be attained. "The pure in heart see God."



## CHAPTER VII.

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### ALTERNATIVE CHAPTER TO CHAPTER VI.

*[In this Chapter we propose to deal with the scientific objections to Prayer in a less philosophic and academic style, in a common-sense practical way that will probably be more generally satisfactory and convincing. The arguments advanced are mainly such as have commended themselves to believers at all times. At the same time, we have endeavoured to embody much of our previous chapter in simpler language. We have already stated at length the scientific case against Prayer in Chapter V., which our readers are requested to read, as well as the first part of Chapter VI. up to page 154. We take up the thread of the argument from that point in what follows.]*

**B**RIEFLY recapitulating the scientific objections to Prayer, we find that they amount to this.

Prayer is irrational, for it is asking God miraculously to interfere with the fixed order of His Universe ; to violate His own immutable Laws of Nature ; to suspend the invariable sequence of cause and effect. Prayer is, in a word, an attempt on man's part to force God's hand ; to induce Him constantly to interrupt the once-established and perfect system of His Government so as to show favour to this man or that. It involves a request for repeated miracles ; it also betrays a crass ignorance, a flat denial of the uniformity and perfect wisdom of

God's ways. Prayer turns a God of law and order into a God of confusion and caprice. Prayer was all well and good in the benighted days of human darkness and ignorance, but now that the darkness and ignorance of the middle ages have given place to the light of twentieth-century knowledge, it is as absurd to pray for rain, or health, or even purity of heart, as to think of asking that the sun may not rise to-morrow. These things we pray for,—rain, health and wealth, and even character itself,—are themselves the results of laws which absolutely render them inevitable ; therefore prayer is a sheer waste of breath. Such is the scientific argument.

A very wise philosopher of old was so convinced that moral and intellectual error of every kind was mainly due to the lack of a clearly-defined grasp of the question at issue, and a consequent mis-application of general terms, that in every argument he first insisted on a clear definition of the general terms or words in question. "Define," was Socrates' one motto. He anticipated Hobbes' *mot*: "Words are the counters of wise men, but the money of fools."

Now the whole matter at issue between materialism and Theism resolves itself into this other question "What do we mean by God? What do we mean by Law or Force?"

Materialism pure and simple does not believe in a

God. But in its dispute with Theists it insists that God,—if there be a God,—once and for all at the beginning of things set the world agoing; that the primordial matter then called into existence was so perfectly constituted and subjected to such well-ordered laws or forces that it henceforth has required no interference on God's part. Man himself is but a part of the great self-existent, self-developing universe, a mere bubble on its surface, existing but for a moment, while the great stream of life flows on for ever.

It is only in deference to us that materialists, for the moment and for purposes of discussion, presuppose a God. They do not believe in Him themselves. Their belief is that life, matter and the solar systems existed from all eternity. To examine the deep and abstruse question of the existence of God is beyond the scope of this chapter. For the time being, both sides take the existence of God for granted, provisionally, and the only point at issue is: "can God—if there be a God—answer Prayer?"

At the outset we refuse to accept the materialist picture of the Christian God as a true representation of our God. It is a caricature, a libel of Him, and not our idea of God and His Universe at all.

The materialist's picture of the Christian God is merely the God of the old Deism. Deism places God before us as creating the world out of nothing by the

fiat of His Will, and then deposes Him. God merely sets the universe agoing, then leaves it to evolve itself, surveying it afar off unconcerned. Any further action on His part is unnecessary. His Providence is superseded by a system of unchangeable routine, that is to say, Nature's Laws, which have somehow, after being made by Him, become independent of God.

Clearly, this Deism is pure materialism all over again. Deism is the natural offspring of a materialistic eighteenth century. It is a form of religion which just accepts such ideas of God and religion as fit in with the accepted views of Nature current in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that gave it birth, and discards from religion as untrue whatever does not square with these views. Deism came into being as the natural outcome of the study of physical science and its methods in the days of Bacon, and after. Bacon laid down the principle of experience and observation as the basis and gauge of all knowledge; and though Bacon himself was no sceptic in matters of faith, others took up his premises, and, applying them to religion, drove these premises home to their logical conclusions. Thus Hobbes, "the Grandfather of English freethinkers," and Locke insisted that everything in religion that was contrary to reason must go overboard. Now, as the knowledge of Nature and of the laws supposed to govern it was very crude in those days, Deism, or the belief in

a God Who set the world agoing then left it to work itself, became a popular creed; but it is almost an exploded creed nowadays.

If Deism is not our present creed, neither is Pantheism. Pantheism is also a new thing and a new word in European religion. Till the eighteenth century, all its ideas were called rank "atheism." It is only with Schelling that it comes forward as a religious theory, and, in order to defend himself and his spiritual cousin, Spinoza, against the atheistic reproach of pantheism, Schelling endeavoured to confine the name to "the doctrine of the immanence of all things in God."

Pantheism says: "God is everywhere and in everything. God *is* the Universe. God is the one eternal substance underlying and animating thought and matter. From Him individual forms constantly emerge and as constantly return to Him and are absorbed again in Him."

Man is thus but a mere bubble; and God is neither a Person, cause or anything but a fine name for the Universe itself.

The charm of Pantheism is that it satisfies a noble aspiration. It assures man of his real union with the Source of his own life and of the universal life. It does in a way what the Incarnation does for Christians, it makes men at one with the Divine Nature. But apart from the Universe, God, in the pantheistic creed, has no existence. "And how can we yield love, obedience, worship, to a mere

eternal substance underlying the universe, a mere torrent of existence that flows onwards inexorably beneath our feet ; we, the ripples, who do but rise upon its surface to sink back again after our little moment of undulation <sup>a</sup> ?” Even more than Deism, Pantheism is materialism personified. It knows nothing of the Deist’s Transcendent God ; it knows nothing of the distinction between virtue and vice, good and evil.

“Who, then, and what is the God in Whom Christians believe ?” it will be asked. He is a God Who is all that Deism and Pantheism ever dreamt of, but He is a great deal more besides. There is a great truth in the Transcendence of Deism. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, My thoughts than your thoughts.” “Behold, God is great, and we know Him not.” “It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are but as grasshoppers.” There is a great Truth also in the Immanence of Pantheism. We do not close our eyes to the Presence of God in His Universe. “If I ascend up into Heaven, Thou art there ; if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there ; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit ? or whither shall I flee from Thy Presence ?” Both Deism

<sup>a</sup> Canon Liddon.

and Pantheism emphasize a valuable truth, but it is a one-sided truth, and Christianity, as ever, combines, heightens, fulfils them both. Our God is both Immanent and Transcendent. To assert God's Presence in the universe is one thing, and a right thing; to identify Him with it is quite another thing, and a blunder. Our idea of God is that He is a living Person, a God Almighty and All-Wise; but more than this, He is a moral God, a God of Justice; still more, a God with a warm Heart, a God of Love, our Father, even as Christ has fully revealed Him to us. And He is a God "Who worketh hitherto"; no absentee God, but One Who from moment to moment is ever guiding and sustaining His world.

We shall see that such a God, Who is at one and the same time Immanent and Transcendent, is not a slave to His Laws, any more than an earthly father is a slave to the good and wise rules and principles he imposes upon himself and his family for the well-being and guidance of his household. Deism naturally thought God was a slave to His laws: for Deism itself was, as we have seen, the outcome of materialism. Therefore it endorsed the scientific objections to prayer. Theism pulverizes these scientific objections, for it gives us a God Who is ever, like the helmsman with his hand on the tiller, superintending His Universe; ever guiding the so-called Laws of Nature, even as He allows His creature, man, to guide them for his welfare.

But what is meant by the "Laws of Nature," and the "forces" which scientists are so constantly holding up before our eyes? Here again, if, as seekers after Truth, we want consistency and accuracy of thought, we must clearly define our terms.

Is a "Law of Nature" some "self-sustained invisible force of which we can give no account except that here it is, as a matter of experience"? Or do we mean by a Law of Nature, "the observed regularity with which God works; the principle according to which God appears to govern His Universe"?

If a Law of Nature means "a self-sustained invisible force," then, there is no God. We have not only fettered His freedom, we have ceased to believe in Him as the originating and controlling Source of all things. If by Law, on the other hand, we only mean that the same cause is always and everywhere followed by the same effect, or, in other words, that God governs His world according to certain regular, uniform and discoverable modes of action which are, therefore, a declaration of His Will,—then we agree with this definition, and accept it.

But we must also remember that, to render justifiable the application of this principle of Law to any particular case, we must be sure of our ground. When we say, for example, "In the world of Nature this series of antecedents (or cause) always produces this particular result (or effect), therefore this will always be the case under any circumstances"; we



reply, "certainly, if the two cases are precisely identical." The same antecedents will produce the same result, if (*but only if*) we are sure that the antecedents in each case are identically the same. A single factor introduced into or subtracted from the antecedents (or cause) will lead to a totally different result. To give a rough illustration: I walk twenty yards along a street and return home. To all appearance I am exactly what I was two minutes previously. But I have brushed against a person just convalescing from small-pox or scarlet-fever. A few virulent microbes introduced among the millions of healthy microbes in me may produce all the difference between health and disease or even death.

Now this is where we maintain that materialists are at fault. Men of science assume that because we are able to classify and arrange many of the facts of Nature under certain physical laws; because inert inorganic matter invariably obeys these laws; because the lower forms of life seem to do so too, therefore these physical laws hold uniformly and universally true. And, say they, as our knowledge grows from less to more, all the facts of life will eventually fall under the same category of mechanical cause and effect. We admit that they are right so far as the inorganic world is concerned, but we deny it absolutely of the world of organic life<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>b</sup> "The *constancy of results* is the characteristic feature of the phenomena under directivity in the inorganic world. But, with re-

Wherever life enters into our calculation, a disturbing factor comes in which we cannot afford to ignore. The antecedents are no longer the same, and therefore the result will be different as well.

Our argument may be clearer if we put it in this form. In the inorganic world we have simply matter *plus* the laws of Nature working upon it. In conscious human life we have matter (i.e., our bodies) *plus* the laws of Nature working upon it, *plus* human intelligence, *plus* will, *plus* emotion. It stands to reason that whereas, in the former case, it is easy to predict what the result will be; as soon as you complicate the problem by introducing three new factors you render prediction almost a moral impossibility. And experience bears this out. You can predict, from observation and experiment, that the molecules of crystals will always be attracted to each other, and arrange themselves in an invariable way, and that the angles between their facets will always be constant. But as soon as you come to living organisms, even in such low forms as plants and birds (see p. 168), it is impossible to predict how the organism is going to develop under *new* surroundings. Still more impossible is it to predict when we are dealing with highly conscious personalities such as God and man. In God, and also in man made in His likeness, we have a creative

gard to directivity in the organic world, the most characteristic feature may be expressed by the phrase '*Infinite variability, as proved by the results.*'"—Prof. Henslow.

power within which guides and directs the Laws of Nature to do its bidding; and to deny man's free will, his power (subordinate to God's Free Will) of doing this or that, is to deny the obvious. As Canon Liddon writes: "Man, in his entire freedom, is absolutely dependent; in his entire dependence, he is absolutely free. This paradox is the literal truth." Our environment does, in a way, bind us, yet the self-directing soul within does enable us to choose our own path.

We fully admit that in so far as man is a body, as well as a soul, that is to say, in so far as he is "an animated parcel of matter," man is subject to the physical laws that obtain elsewhere in the world of matter. This is why, so long as we are in the body, our life is and must be more or less conditioned by our environment. But man is body *plus* soul, and, of the two, the soul is by far the more potent factor, and constantly enables man to rise superior to the most unfavourable surroundings. Therefore we decline to allow scientists to tie and bind us down to their inelastic inexorable physical laws; to determine not only our actions but our thoughts and character simply by our surroundings as if we were so many crystals or corpses.

Far from blindly believing them when they tell us that even God cannot interfere with His own Laws of Nature, even if He would, we deliberately say that He not only can but does do it daily. If this is a

miracle which God cannot work, then He must be inferior to His own creatures, for we ourselves are constantly working this very miracle. By planting extensive forests or destroying them, we increase or decrease the rainfall. We drain a fen-country and thereby alter its climate, and so conduce to men's health and longevity. We bring our own will and the influence of our character to bear on those with whom we associate, and make them more like ourselves than they would otherwise be. Now if we, weak men, can produce rain, introduce health where disease previously dwelt, make our friends purer in heart; are we to deny to God a power which we, His creatures, possess? In our own actions to bring about the effects described, we in nowise alter, suspend or cancel the Laws of Nature. On the contrary, we rule Nature by obeying her laws; but we do learn to guide and direct them into new channels. May not God do the same? Is it asking Him to work a miracle when we pray to Him to give us on a larger scale the spiritual and temporal blessings which we ourselves can procure for our own well-being in a smaller way? We have discussed this more fully elsewhere (pp. 207-8), and we must ask our readers to refer to those pages. There we have also tried to prove that the very uniformity of these laws is one reason the more why we should confidently and boldly come to God's Throne of grace in prayer.

We believe that this is an adequate answer to the scientific objections. If more is needed, it would be easy to point out that the Laws of Nature are not only far too mechanical to be applied to moral and spiritual conscious beings, but are in themselves artificial abstractions, and, at the best, only second causes. Human intelligence is far too limited to trace the chain of cause and effect beyond a very short way. We probably understand God's Providential government of His universe very little better than a clever dog can interpret his master's actions; yet we are for ever dogmatizing as if we carried the key of the Universe in our pocket. Besides the second causes which alone are plain to us, there must be a large number of intermediate links in the vast chain of cause and effect which we cannot see, till we get to the ultimate and First Cause of all, God. The apt illustration already quoted from Schaff (see pp. 166-7) shows how easily God by a responsive touch, in answer to our prayers, at the higher, and not at the lower part of the chain of progressive causes, can produce the desired results without introducing any miraculous interruption of the so-called fixed order of sequence in the course of things which we can alone see.

Besides, who are we to deny the possibility of Miracles? What is a miracle but a very simple (to God) variation of God's ordinary mode of self-expression? It is an ordinary manifestation of God's activity in a way to which we are not

accustomed. "To me there is nothing but miracle," said Walt Whitman, and most thinking men would say the same.

Allusion has been made earlier in the book to the famous "Hospital Test," and as the historical controversy of 1872-3 brought the points at issue between Science and Religion vividly before the public, and the quarrel assumed a specially acute phase, it may be well to discuss it here. The most eminent men on either side took part in this controversy. "It was proposed to take two wards of the same hospital, to each of which the same class of patients should be sent, great care being taken, in the allotment of patients, to give to neither ward any advantage over the other. Then it was proposed to invite the Christian world, or a part of it, to pray for the recovery of the patients in one ward, leaving those in the other ward unprayed for; and finally, after the process had been continued long enough for a sufficient induction, it was proposed to examine the respective percentages of recovery, for the purpose of discovering whether the ward for which prayer had been made could show a more favourable return. If so, the efficacy of prayer would be established; if not, it was contended that the principle of the method of difference required us to reject the doctrine of the efficacy of prayer as untrue." (Jellett.)

The experiment was never actually tried, for obvious reasons. As Dr. Jellett truly says: "Let

us suppose that the experiment was made, and that the difference between one ward *plus* prayer, and another ward *minus* prayer was nil. What would this prove? The inefficacy of prayer? Certainly not: but the inefficacy of prayer *under the conditions of experiment.*" Prayer under conditions of an experiment is an impossible test, because in prayer "motive" counts for everything, it is *a sine quâ non*. "Prayer, if it is to produce any effect, produces it by acting on the Will of God, Who knows perfectly well by what motives the petitioner is actuated, and here the motive would be wanting in the very quality God requires of us, implicit faith; we should be putting God Himself to the test to satisfy the curiosity of men." It is all well and good to urge: "But is not the purpose in this particular experiment a good one, a sincere desire to elicit the truth, and convince unbelievers?" Plausible as this may sound, "the success of the supposed prayer-experiment would prove, not simply the efficacy of prayer, but the efficacy of prayer *without faith or trust in God*." 45

We have dwelt more than long enough on the objections to prayer, we shall conclude with a few arguments in favour of it.

(a) There is, to begin with, the *universal instinct* of prayer, an instinct so universal that we might almost accept the phrase "man is a praying animal" as a definition of man. Go where we will, and as

<sup>c</sup> Jellett, "Donnellan Lectures," pp. 60, 61, 94, 95, 96.

far back into the records of the past as we may, from the very beginning, in every land, so soon as men could interpret themselves with even a ray of intelligence, man has prayed. There has ever risen the cry which we still hear as often as we pause and listen to the voice of our own hearts,—the cry for God. It is the same cry,—though not yet articulately voiced,—which afterwards found clearer expression in the inspired writer's pregnant words: "My soul thirsteth for God, even for the living God"; "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the Lord"; "My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." To our colder moods these words may seem exaggerated and fanatical, yet they utter not simply the experience of an emotional set of Jewish singers, but one of the profoundest yearnings and desires of every human heart, a yearning which no words can adequately voice.

True, in the early stages of primitive man's civilization, man's idea of God is low and crude. His god is only a gigantic man, strong and cruel, and we human beings his abject slaves. As a clever sceptic puts it: "To this god man prays, that is to say, he begs; he sings hymns, that is to say, he flatters; he sacrifices, that is to say, he pays tribute, chiefly out of fear, but partly in the hope of getting something better in return,—long life, riches, and fruitful wives." Clever and cynical as this may be, it does not cancel the fact that at all times and everywhere man is a praying creature. How else



do you account for the spectacle of the ancient heathen cities in which we are told there were almost as many temples as houses, and a god for every score of men? If we can make no better use of the idolatries of the world, let us at least summon them as witnesses to man's craving for God, a craving which is an inbred intuition of universal man. Bishop Gore sees in this universal instinct of prayer a proof of the existence of God. "The faculty of prayer would not be thus universal in man were it not a fact that there is a reality outside us, God, with Whom this prayer-faculty brings us into actual touch." We have already stated our own belief that it is "the image of God within us" crying for reunion with its Divine Source.

Disparage it as sceptics may, the universality of the prayer-instinct, "O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come," is a significant fact. As Prof. Max Müller says: "we are so fashioned,—and it is no merit of our own—that as soon as we awake, we feel on all sides our dependence on something else, and all nations join in some way or other in the words of the Psalmist: 'it is He that hath made us and not we ourselves.' "

There is far more than appears on the surface in Pope's words:

"Father of all! in every age,  
In every clime adored  
By saint, by savage, and by sage,  
Jehovah, Jove, or Lord."

It may be urged: "but, after all, it is only an *instinct*, and developed reason corrects it." We should prefer to say that instinct is above reason, passes our understanding, and invariably guides us right. Is it not a common experience that intuition is truer and safer than logic; that a conviction springing from the heart, or subconscious self, or we know not where, is better than the most faultless syllogism; that the very deepest truths are precisely those which cannot be proved by argument? We all know a great deal more than we can prove, and many a vital guiding truth is the suggestion of the God-soul within, acting independently of reason, its servant. The longer we live, indeed, the less we trust in logic; the more we trust in the simple primitive inspirations of the human heart. Christ never discusses the reasonableness of prayer, but He constantly appeals to our prayer-instinct, and we feel and know that from the deeps of His Divine nature He is calling to the deeps of our nature when He bids us pray. "Ask, and ye shall have."

(b) And is the argument from the general experience of believers in God to count for nothing, when they tell us that they have proved in themselves that our Father is a God Who answers prayer? Is this general personal experience as superficial, emotional, worthless as many would have us fancy? Does it merely beg the question? Is it not the first principle, the very foundation of modern science that "all knowledge is the result of observation and

experience?" If this be true of the natural world, why should this definition not hold good in the spiritual world? And the saints of God in times past and times present assure us that always, everywhere, their experience has been that "they have asked, and had; sought, and found; knocked, and it has been opened unto them."

We need not elaborate this argument here, for we have attempted to deal with it fully in our last chapter (see pp. 192-5).

(c) *Argument from Scripture.* It seems absolutely impossible to reconcile the teaching of the Bible with any system that excludes prayer. From cover to cover, Holy Scripture implies that God respects the freewill of man as a moral being. God has, in His Wisdom, chosen to surround Himself with children possessed of intelligence, will, and feeling, and, although, by His Holy Spirit, He purifies our atmosphere to the utmost of His power, He refuses to lay His finger on our wills and compel us to be good or to do the right apart from our own actions and determinations. God must obtain our consent before He gives us His help; prayer, or the cry of the inmost soul to its God, is our consent. Therefore, throughout the Bible, prayer is attached by God as a condition to various spiritual and material blessings. True, sacrifice largely replaces prayer in the Old Testament, but the universal instinct could not be thus repressed. Again and again does prayer burst forth from the heart and

lips of Old Testament saints, and both Old Testament teaching and example insist on the efficacy of prayer as a point of vital importance.

When we turn to the New Testament, the case for the efficacy of prayer is strengthened a thousandfold. Christ, both by His teaching and example, teaches the efficacy of Prayer by every means in His power. We have already seen in a previous chapter the immense value He Himself attached to prayer, as the main source of His strength. Constantly do we read that He went to a quiet place to pray, or even: "He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God."

And in His teaching, not only does Christ enjoin prayer on His disciples, both for spiritual and material blessings: "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint": "Give us this day our daily bread"; but, so great a value does Christ lay on prayer, that He teaches His disciples *how* to pray. "After this manner, pray ye: Our Father."

More than this, the Bible forestalls all modern objections to prayer, and brushes them aside as no barriers whatever in any way limiting the efficacy of prayer. God foresaw all our scientific and theological difficulties, and, through His mouthpieces, prophets and evangelists, answers them for us. The uniformity and regularity of the laws of nature are fully recognized in the Bible. God's Kingdom is recognized in Scripture as a natural and universal

kingdom or dominion absolutely subject to and ordered by God. His dominion embraces all objects, persons, and events; all doings of individuals and nations, all the works and changes of Nature, absolutely everything without exception: nothing whatever is withdrawn from dependence upon Him. He is King of all the earth (Ps. xlvii. 7); natural agents are His ministers (Pss. civ. and cxlviii.).

The Bible anticipates not only scientific objections, but theological difficulties as well: "Our Heavenly Father knoweth what we have need of before we ask Him." The Bible knows too that "man knoweth not what to pray for as he ought."

And yet God in His Bible commands us to pray. His words to that effect are clear, precise, definite. No possible system of interpretation can remove the teaching of the necessity of prayer and of the efficacy of prayer from the Bible.

(d) But even more decisive than any individual text, or the collective chain of corroborative evidence that may be welded together from the whole teaching and Spirit of the Bible, is the inference to be drawn from the supreme revelation made to us by Christ when He unveils God to us as "Our Father." This is not a mere word-picture. Christ's whole life, and the whole tone of His teaching, show the emphasis He lays on the actual Fatherhood of God, with every single attribute that this intimate relationship naturally and necessarily carries with it. All that sense of fellowship, love, trust, of hope and

confidence, of assured sympathy which we associate with the words Father and child,—these are here, and in an intensified form. Christ meant us so to interpret the Fatherhood of God. When Jesus, in the story of the Prodigal Son, for example, says that the Father watched and longed for His son's return, and welcomed him with kisses and a joyful feast, He meant us to take the essential truth home to our hearts, that God is our Father in every sense of the word that the best of earthly fathers is father to his child,—in actual kinship, in love, in sympathy.

We are too afraid to attribute emotion to God. Is emotion a moral weakness and unworthy of God? Was Jesus weak when He wept at Lazarus' graveside? Is a man who relieves sorrow and distress, but is untouched by it,—giving to misery all he has but not one tear,—is he our ideal of the perfect man? He may be very strong, and upright, and almost superhuman, but such a man we never could love. So "to endeavour to resolve God into intellect without affections is Atheism under a new name: for mere intellect is not an active principle" (F. W. Newman).

To call God "Our Father," and yet to fancy that He is a God Who does not hear and answer His children's prayers, is a contradiction in terms. Think what it would mean if an earthly father said to his child, "I have made once and for all the best and wisest arrangements for your welfare. Everything that could be done has been done for you.

And now remember that whatever you need, whatever trouble may assail you, you must not look to me for help. Your only plan is to bring yourself back again into conformity with the wise and self-regulating arrangements I have laid down unchangeably for the management of my household. I cannot alter them, for I am as much bound by them as you are." Would not such a cast-iron system have a blasting withering effect on a child, and should we not rightly call such a parent an inhuman monster?

Thank God! this is not the picture Christ draws of His and our Father. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him." "Ask, and ye shall have."

If this matter were a merely speculative question, it would not be of such vital moment which attitude we adopted towards our relationship to God, what answer we gave to the problem: "Is there any efficacy in Prayer?" But there are some practical questions which are not merely speculative truths, but influence men's whole lives deeply, and this is one of them. A writer in the *Hibbert Journal* well expresses this: "If you follow, for instance, J. S. Mill's view that 'love of virtue is love of pleasure in disguise,' virtue is not now to you just what it was before. The moment I understand that what I am really aiming at is not virtue, as

I previously supposed, but pleasure, all my delusions about the supereminence of virtue will vanish ; and the love of virtue, if I am true to my convictions, will give place to an entirely different order of desire. I dreamt previously that I was in a palace : you have now awakened me to the truth that I am in a sty ; and being awake you cannot expect me, as a rational being, to play at believing that my acorns are pearls, and my wash the nectar of the gods. Assuming Mill's explanation of the love of virtue to be true, my only chance of retaining the higher love of it is to remain in total ignorance of his explanation—So, again, whatever theory you set up of moral responsibility—Freewill or Determinism—must apply to you in every detail of your daily life.”

So it is that our questions : “ Is there a God ? ” “ Does He hear prayer ? ” “ Are we bound to the Juggernaut-car of inexorable Laws of Nature ? ” are not the mere theoretical problems many would have us fancy. The view we adopt on these subjects is to us a matter of life and death, for it will colour every single detail of our life. In purely speculative hypotheses, a man may believe, disbelieve, or suspend his decision with comparative impunity. But in questions which are of vital practical importance, it must be “ Yes ” or “ No ” ; belief or disbelief. Here our theory creates our moral world : our convictions formulate a principle to which the whole length and breadth of our



experience must henceforth be conformed. Our creed is the magic wand which gives its true value to whatever it touches. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he," and, therefore, our responsibility in arriving at a right decision is enormous.

How then are we to arrive at a right decision in this vital matter? Where is the Truth? Some say it is here, others there: which are we to follow?

We may accept the voice of Authority, and borrow our opinions from others, and perhaps, for some, this is the only way. Fortunately, He, Who is the Truth, has spoken the last word on the subject in Holy Scripture, and there we have a safe Guide.

But, faith is never conviction till we have ourselves trod the hard road of personal experience, and by the light of the Holy Spirit within us, "the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world," probed right down to the heart of things for ourselves.

He who said: "I am the Truth," also graciously promised that "The Holy Spirit shall guide you into all Truth," and this self-acquired truth is the only kind of Truth of which it can really be said, "The Truth shall make you free."

Over and over again have we repeated: "There is an immortal centre in us all where Truth abides in fulness," and it is with the eye of the soul that we see the Truth. Guided by the indwelling Spirit's light, we must cultivate the Divine consciousness

within us; we must truly open the door of our inmost heart to God in prayer and consciously commune and humbly walk with Him, for thus alone shall we see the Truth. "Spiritual things *are* spiritually discerned," and only he who has "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost" in his heart (consciously or unconsciously),—he whose soul is in touch with the Father-Soul,—he and he alone, "thinks the thought that is highest, and earnestly strives to live the thought he thinks."

But, here as ever, "each man must work out his own salvation." Precisely as God will not make us good, by mere mechanical pressure, apart from our own actions and determinations, else the goodness, such as it was, would be His, and not ours,—even so, the Spirit of Truth, which guideth into all truth, will not compel us to see the Truth, apart from our own search, apart from our own active, patient, courageous quest for it. By exercise, by contemplation, by prayer, above all by serving God in serving man, we must, even as Christ did, develope the immortal centre where Truth abides in fulness, just as we must suppress the sensual and material lower nature, "the gross flesh that hems truth in, wall upon wall, all around." Then, indeed, shall Truth abide in us. "The pure in heart," not only shall, but actually do "see God."

PART III.



Devotional.



## CHAPTER VIII.

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SOME HELPS TO PRAYER, AND SOME  
HINDRANCES.

### *Argument.*

A. THE disciple's cry, "Lord, teach us to pray," echoed by every human heart. We know prayer should be the heart's spontaneous utterance, yet we crave for guidance; the prayer-ideal is too high for us, we cannot attain unto it.

Danger of rules. Distinction between principles and rules. Where rules become a snare.

Yet there are rules of Prayer that are helpful if we keep them as our servants, not masters: (1) A stated time for prayer. (2) A stated place. (3) Seclusion. (4) "Watch unto prayer." (5) Reverence in Prayer. (6) "Prayer in faith," as distinguished from "faith in prayer." (7) Avoid generalities. (8) "Where you cannot pray as you would, pray as you can."

B. *Hindrances to prayer.* Wilful sin, selfishness and an unforgiving temper.

## CHAPTER VIII.

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SOME HELPS TO PRAYER, AND SOME HINDRANCES.

A.

*Rules and principles of Prayer.*

“AND it came to pass as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.”

Now, we cannot suppose for one moment that the disciple, who asked Christ to teach him and his fellow-disciples to pray, had never prayed and did not know how to do so.

He was a Jew, and all Jews were prayerful men. But he had just witnessed Christ's devotions. He felt, as we feel, the imperfection of his own prayers. He knew there must be a more excellent way than his own, and he desired to learn it. He only echoed the cry of every human heart, longing for a truer and closer communion with its God, when he said to Christ, “Lord, teach us to pray.”

When we ourselves kneel in private to pray, is it not our constant experience that a dead weight of dryness and languor seems to seal the fountain of prayer? Do we not instinctively crave for some

wiser hand to guide us, for some simple rules which may help us in our hour of need ?

We know quite well that prayer, talking with God, should be spontaneous, if it is to be worth anything. It must come from the heart, and our heart in its conscious converse with our Heavenly Father should need no more prompting than does a child when he speaks to a father whom he loves and trusts.

All this we know. Yet what is our actual experience ? We kneel in prayer, and alas ! our heart is often dumb. There comes over us a feeling of depression, sometimes of darkness ; a spiritual drought of soul : a strange wandering of our thoughts ; our devotions lack life and interest. And, at such moments, we yearn for some sympathetic hand, some experienced guide to show us the way in our hour of perplexity and discouragement. The prayer-ideal is too high for us ordinary mortals, we cannot attain unto it. Yet, surely, there must be some road by which we may approach nearer to this ideal, obtain a distant glimpse of it ; will not someone point us out the way, give us some plain, simple directions that will bring us to this road ? In a word, is there no answer to the human heart's cry : " teach us to pray ? "

It is to this human cry we owe that best of all prayers, " Our Lord's Prayer." It is in answer to this earnest human appeal that we venture to offer a few rules of prayer, which the long experience of mankind has proved to be of some help and use.



One word of caution. "Rules, even holy rules," says Dean Goulburn, "may be a snare, and prove burdensome and entangling rather than helpful, if, in administering them to ourselves, we do not continually keep our eye on the Spirit and principle of them."

From the very nature of the case, we vary so in character, in position, in culture that no two of us are alike. To lay down universal rules for our universal guidance is an impossibility and an impertinence. It is rather principles we want. Take a rule, any rule, and there is only one way of keeping it, the way of literal obedience, and this may often prove a foolish and even a disobedient way. But get a principle, and there are a thousand ways in which we may apply it, all of which may be wise and beneficial. Principles may be just all round, if they are wisely acted on; but definite inelastic rules must be unjust, however fairly applied, simply because they will not stretch and vary till they answer to every man's need. They leave no scope for discretion and judgment. Hence it is that Christ gives us principles, not rules. More than this He often states these principles, e.g. in His Golden Rule, in a paradoxical form, precisely in order that we may not degrade them into mere maxims and rules. "Whosoever shall strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

But men prefer rules. Principles tax thought; they involve personal responsibility, and for the

most part men hate the labour of thought, and shrink from the burden of responsibility. They would rather have a clear-cut, definite, hard and fast rule. "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are. . . . *I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.*"

It is so easy to scrupulously observe certain prescribed forms and rules, and then to account oneself the special favourite of Heaven: to go through the formality of sundry rites and ceremonies, and walk straight from such worship of God to rob the widow and the orphan. This was precisely Christ's quarrel with the Pharisees of His day. Because they entered the gates of worship, because they stood before the altar, because they tithed even the herbs of their gardens, therefore they felt that they had done all that God claimed of them, and they expected their reward.

Of course, such a type of religion is a caricature of religion, yet it is ever with us: it is so natural. Men fast a little, they go to early morning service, they practise small acts of self-denial, and, refreshed by these godly exercises, with consciences satisfied, they enter with tenfold vigour into all the excitements of the season, feeling that it is easy to make the worship of God and the love of the world walk hand in hand.

Nowhere does God condemn religious forms as such. They are essential. But religious observances must be the natural expression of the

heart, or else, being untrue, they beget habitual hypocrisy.

This is why in the multiplicity of rules there ever lurks the possibility of a grave danger to ourselves, and a want of consideration for others. In placing upon our shoulders needless burdens and restrictions which sour our temper, narrow our vision, and tempt us to condemn others who do not observe the same strictness of rule, we are apt to forget that our formalism is often little but a subtle form of self-pleasing, and not the holy life within which we imagine it to be.

Well says Bishop Wilkinson: "Do not attempt more prayers or rules than your strength or time allows. Beware of a fidgetty, fussy kind of religion." A great saint was one day asked: "How can I live the higher life?" He answered, "My child, go and live the lower one, and God will teach you the higher."

With this caution against the snare and danger of rules, there is a great deal to be said in their favour, so long as they are our servants, not our masters.

In Prayer, we cannot do without rules. Prayer is a very serious matter. If we do not introduce some method into it, set apart a certain portion of the day for it, give it that earnest attention which we readily bring to bear upon the most necessary and important interests of our daily life, we can

never hope to form that habit of prayer which is the life-breath of our spiritual life.

Even Christ fences the serious business of daily prayer around with definite broad rules:—"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father Which is in secret, and thy Father Which is in secret shall reward thee openly."

Christ here seems to lay stress on two, if not three, essential requisites of private prayer. There should be a definite place set apart; we must be alone; and there should be stated times for prayer.

(i.) *A stated time.* The passage quoted may not seem to bear this out, for it only says, "when thou prayest." But Christ was speaking to a Jew, and we know from Daniel and the Psalms that the Jewish rule in Old Testament days was: "In the evening, and morning and at noonday will I pray, and that instantly."

The Psalmist goes further: "Seven times a day do I praise Thee," just as the New Testament bids us pray without ceasing, and we know that our Lord not only had His regular times of praying (S. Mark i. 35), but constantly sought other opportunities during the day for secret prayer.

But ours is a busy age, where one duty treads hard upon the heel of another, and a slavish adherence to such counsels of perfection would be a grievous yoke under which we should fret, be-

sides needlessly interfering with our other plain duties.

We can, however, all devote at least five minutes, morning and evening, to communion with God, and God can do much in these five minutes of heartfelt prayer. "In the morning and in the evening will I pray, and that instantly." "Twice in the day," says Stopford Brooke, "it has been for ages the habit of the race to use this talisman, once for the sanctification of the day; once for the sanctification of the night. Such prayer is the guard of life."

Then we can go forth to our day's work, and *there* "pray without ceasing." Our very work will be active prayer. "What a blessed thing is active prayer," said S. Francis de Sales one day to a friend, "and by active prayer, I mean doing everything in God's Presence and for His Service."

(ii.) *A definite place of prayer.* "Habit is a cable; we weave a thread of it each day, and it becomes so strong we cannot break it." This is a truth that holds good even in trivial matters, and perhaps we do not sufficiently value the importance of associations. To many of us a certain chair, a certain table, a certain pen, a certain paper are now essential, from long habit, if we are to do our best work. There are in every man's life certain spots so steeped for him in a hallowed atmosphere all their own, that he cannot do what he does there either so well, so thoroughly or with the same touch

of inspiration, anywhere else. So it is with the place of prayer. "Daniel went into his house, *into his chamber*, and knelt upon his knees, and prayed, *his windows being opened* in his chamber towards Jerusalem, *as he did aforetime*."

Of course, we must not press this too far. Doubtless, when Christ bids us "enter into thy chamber" and there pray, He only means to lay stress on what we shall emphasize in our next point, quietness and seclusion. Any place will do for prayer if only we can find seclusion there. He who said "enter into thy chamber," was often homeless during His active ministry. His place of prayer was some desert place, or mountain, or a solitary spot, but it was always a quiet place, shut away from earth's discordant sounds.

(iii.) *Seclusion in prayer.* The soul must be alone in private prayer with its God. "The greatness of this necessity is in proportion to the greatness of the soul" (Farrar). We see the truth of this remark when we remember how often our Lord, even amidst the loneliness of desert places, dismissed His faithful and beloved Twelve that He might be still more completely alone.

(iv.) We must "*watch unto prayer*." We do not usually make this of enough importance. We must store up matter for our prayers; take account of the hours as they pass, watch our steps and thoughts in the work-day; note our defects and failures there, in order that we may know what to pray about,

what to pray for, what to pray against, when the time comes.

This is the best preparation, though there is another that should always accompany it. We have seen that it is the Holy Spirit that prompts us in prayer, and, as a quaint old writer puts it, "the Spirit rides most triumphantly in His own chariot" (i.e. the Word of God). It is undoubtedly a great help to us, before we pray, to prepare our hearts by reading even a few verses of the Bible: God's chosen means of enlightenment, comfort, rebuke, quickening. George Müller confessed that often he could not pray until he had thus steadied his mind upon the Word of God.

Preparation, and careful preparation, as Bishop Hamilton said, is needed. We are well aware that many saintly men protest against such preparation for prayer. They maintain that it is making human wisdom quench the Holy Spirit within us when it offers to prompt us spontaneously and intercede for us in prayer according to the Will of God. Our prayers, say they, should not be addressed to God in the carefully-studied words of human wisdom, we should pray on the spur of the moment as the Holy Spirit moves us.

True, our Lord told His disciples that there were times when they should take no thought beforehand how or what they should speak, for it should be given them in that hour what they were to say.

But when they asked Him how they should pray,

Christ did not tell them to rely entirely on the inspiration of the hour. On the contrary, He Himself gave them a model Prayer for their guidance. "After this manner pray ye." We have seen how our Lord's Prayer includes reverence, praise, bowing to the Will of God, intercession and supplication, and how carefully our Lord places these in a certain order. Christ meant His disciples to study this pattern prayer, its structure and method, and to prepare theirs on that model.

We have no right to ask God's help if we approach Him without due preparation. Indeed, it seems to us to border on irreverence.

(v.) *Reverence in Prayer.* On this subject we have already spoken at some length in our second chapter. Here we only wish to glance at a few details which naturally flow from this broad principle of Reverence.

"I often think," said a holy man, "that when the angels watch us praying, with our lazy attitudes and wandering thoughts, they must think us rude to their God; for all we read of them in their holy, heavenly worship has a sublime intensity of reverence about it" (cf. Is. vi.).

Like Isaiah, we also want a live coal from God's altar to touch and cleanse our lips so that we may truly "hallow God's Name." As we all know, our Lord places these words in the very forefront of His model Prayer, not only to caution us against holding any views of God's character which are unworthy



of Him<sup>a</sup>; but, more than this, if the words "Hallowed be Thy Name" teach us anything, they teach us this, that in every act, and thought, and place where the reality of the Divine Presence is forced upon us, the vivid sense of that Divine Presence should fill our whole being, and hallow our thoughts. The motive of reverence is the soul of all true worship.

Even our *attitude* in prayer is a serious matter. The Jews prayed most often standing, except in times of humiliation, when they knelt or prostrated themselves before the Lord. In the New Testament, all Christians are represented as kneeling in prayer, wherever the posture is mentioned. Our Lord knelt, we are told, in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Whether we sit, stand or kneel when we pray, may in itself seem a matter of no importance, yet those who realize the influence exercised by body on spirit, will clearly see that it is not a matter of indifference. "Despise not thou the day of small things" has a deep truth and principle underlying it, and this is why God Himself lays stress on even such small details as "take thy shoes from off thy feet, for the ground whereon thou standest is holy ground."

<sup>a</sup> cf. Bacon, Essay xvii. "It were better to have no opinion of God at all, than such an opinion as is unworthy of Him. For the one is unbelief, the other is contumely; and certainly superstition is the reproach of the Deity. Plutarch saith well to that purpose: 'Surely, I had rather a great deal men should say there was no such man as Plutarch at all, than that they should say there was one Plutarch that would eat his children as soon as they were born,' as the poets speak of the god Saturn."

From constant habit and use, prayer is apt to become automatic; and nowhere have we to be more on our guard against the snare of that familiarity which robs the spiritual life of its very heart, and hardens and deadens the soul, than in the outward things of religion, no matter what the special form of approaching God may be, our Church-going, our Bible, or our prayers.

(vi.) *Prayer in faith.* We know in Whom we believe, an Almighty, All-wise God, Who is above all else our loving Father. We know that our Father, like all good and wise fathers, has framed rules and principles for the orderly and happy guidance of His household, principles by which He Himself abides. We also know that because our Father is wise and good, He is not a slave to His laws, good and wise as they are. He is ready so to modify and transcend them as to meet every emergency that may arise, ever willing to supply our real wants and thus promote our welfare. Our idea of our Father is so high that we are sure that His Love for us knows no limits but those which Love itself imposes. When God's Love refuses or resists our heart-requests it is because compliance with our petition would itself be a violation of love. Therefore, we come confidently and boldly to God's Throne of grace, and, "in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known unto God," nothing doubting but that He is a God Who gladly "heareth prayer."

But *prayer in faith* is something very different from that *faith in prayer* which fancies that because certain prayers are offered, therefore the results will be exactly such as we asked. S. Paul prayed in faith when he implored God thrice that his "thorn in the flesh" should be removed; but his faith in prayer did not abate one jot because the actual answer was not identical with his request.

This is the fallacy that lies at the root of the suggested "hospital test" of which we spoke in our last chapter. It might imply *faith in prayer*, but it would certainly not be *prayer in faith*. It would, on the contrary, be the very reverse of faith, putting God Himself to the test presumptuously, "seeking for a sign," and refusing to be satisfied unless that very sign is given us.

Someone has well compared prayer, and God's answer, to the human voice and Nature's echo of it. The echo which the mountain gives back to our cry is calm and pure and musical, however harsh, or dissonant, or strained our voice may be. Your cry or shout may rise into a piercing scream; but if you wait and listen, it comes back to you with all the discord and excitement strained out of it, and a mystical force, sweetness and purity all its own.

S. Paul's case well illustrates this: "There was given me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me. Concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me. And He said unto me; My grace is sufficient for thee, for My

strength is made perfect in weakness." How much more pure and comforting is the heavenly echo to Paul's cry, than the passionate importunity of his earthly scream. He at once realizes this; "Therefore I take pleasure in my infirmities."

Bnt often our own faith in prayer cannot stand this severe strain. We pray, and God's answer is so soft, and sweet, and low that we catch no echo, and fancy our prayer has not been heard of God.

To carry the analogy still further; in some cases of echo, explained by Rayleigh <sup>b</sup>, "when the original sound is a compound musical note, the octave of the fundamental tone is reflected in a quite different key than that tone itself." So it is at times with God's answer to our prayer. God from the Mountain of His Holiness seems to echo too loud. And this echo is so different from our own cry that we do not recognize it. We said "ease," and the God-mountain echo answers "trouble"; we said "rest," He answers "toil"; we said "peace," He replies "conflict."

Yet the echo faithfully repeats our cry. Our cry "ease" brings back the echo "heavenly ease," the ease that must first pass through many purifying troubles, and in our ears we seem to hear "trouble." God is really answering in each case the very prayer we offered, only we do not remember that when we ask

<sup>b</sup> Sound, II. § 296. Something of the same kind is to be noticed in the whispering gallery of S. Paul's, and the still more remarkable case of the Cathedral of Girgenti, in Sicily, mentioned by Sir John Herschel.

for "rest," we must first get our work done ; when we ask for peace, we must first have fought our good fight and won our victory. Thus it is that to our "ease," and "rest," and "peace," God really and truly answers "Ease," Rest," "Peace."

(vii.) *Avoid generalities in prayer.* Here we cannot do better than quote Mr. Ruskin's words: "When you are confessing your sins to God, never call yourself a 'sinner.' This is very cheap and vague confession, and utterly useless. Call yourself a liar, a sluggard, a glutton, &c., if you really find yourself to be one of these in anywise. Then take steady means to check yourself in whatever fault you have ascertained, and justly accused yourself of."

(viii.) One word more. When we pray let us not forget Walsham How's golden words: "In prayer, when we look for sensations of fervour, and peace, and joy, we are seeking self, not God. It is necessary we should pray: it is not necessary we should feel happy in praying. Our prayers are not heard for their emotional fervour, but for Christ's sake."

We shall add no words of our own, but merely quote four other wise sayings to the same effect. "Men ought always to pray and not to faint" comes first and foremost, from our Lord's own lips. "Where you cannot pray as you would, pray as you can" (Goulburn). "Let it make no difference to thee whether thou art cold or warm, if thou art doing thy duty" (Marcus Aurelius).

“Be not afraid to pray,—to pray is right.  
Pray if thou canst with hope; but ever pray.  
Though hope be weak, or sick with long delay,  
Pray in the darkness, if there be no light.”

*H. Coleridge.*

## B.

### *Hindrances to prayer.*

At the opening of this chapter we said: we kneel in private prayer, and a dead-weight of languor, deadness, dryness seems to seal the fountain of prayer. We pray, and no answer comes.

Is there any flaw in our praying? Not necessarily. We have just seen that we do not always recognize God's echo. We have also seen that sensations of fervour, peace and joy in prayer are very far from essentials of true prayer. We pray seeking after God, not exclusively for our own comfortable feelings.

But our languor, dryness, deadness may be due to a serious flaw in ourselves. They may be due to our own personal sins which are putting us completely out of touch with God; and it is our bounden duty to cross-examine ourselves very closely and severely in this matter.

“We know that God heareth not sinners.” This, of course, must not be taken absolutely literally, for it would exclude every man on earth from

true and acceptable prayer°. But the words do apply to all such as are wilfully and deliberately following a course of action which they know to be sinful, yet habitually pray without the least intention of giving up their evil ways. Deliberate wilful sin, so long as it is unrepented of, is and must be a fatal barrier to prayer. We are, of our own freewill and accord, breaking off our connection with God, interrupting the electric circuit, "grounding" or even "cutting" the mystic prayer-wire which is our sole channel of communication with our Heavenly Father.

Is this not precisely what God Himself tells us in Isaiah (i., lviii., lix.)? "When ye make many prayers, I will not hear: *your hands are full of blood.*" "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, neither His ear heavy: *but your iniquities have separated between you and your God: and your sins have hid His Face from you, that He will not hear.*"

We cannot make a commercial bargain with God, or bribe Him to let us hug our sin and please Him at the same time; to serve Him a little and our lusts a great deal; to bow before his altar and straightway go forth "to draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope." God does not countenance such immoral formalism and organized hypocrisy. If we act thus, no amount of prayers will avail to place us in touch with our

° See *supra*, Chap. IV., Part II.

Father. We are crucifying Christ afresh, quenching the Holy Spirit, and deliberately flying in the face of God's Will, cutting ourselves away from God.

"We know that God heareth not sinners."

The three chief hindrances to prayer are wilful sin, in any shape or form; selfishness, the very root of sin; and an unforgiving spirit.

If sin "cuts" the prayer-wire, selfishness "grounds" it. S. John had well learnt the heart of Christ's teaching when he wrote: "Beloved, this is the message that we have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another: for love is of God. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. Whosoever hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

This is the practical test of our being in touch with God: "of what value are we to our fellow-men?" (cf. S. Matth. xxv. 35 sqq.). Let a man conscientiously and honestly ask himself before he prays: What am I doing here? Whom have I fed? or clothed? or comforted? To which of my brethren have I held out a helping hand? What thought do I take for others? Which of my fellow-men is the better for my being here? or am I a mere cumberer of the ground? Am I living purely for my own bodily ease, and pleasure and personal self-aggrandizement? I am my brother's keeper, nay my brother's brother, how do I show it? Am I, in the



very least doing the one thing on earth Christ wants me to do, "serving God in serving man?"

And then there is the unforgiving temper. Christ plainly warns us that it is of no earthly use to approach God with prayers and sacrifices so long as we remain selfish, uncharitable, ungenerous towards our fellow-men. "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee: leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled with thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

God deals with us as we deal with our fellow-men.

"We do pray for mercy.

And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
The deeds of mercy."

It is to bring this truth home to us that our Lord, in His Prayer, makes us pray in these words: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: for with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured unto you again." And the parable of the Two Debtors tells us precisely the same thing.

We can easily see why this is so. The unforgiving temper has its root in hatred, and "if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." He is dwelling in utter darkness. Coming out of an evil heart, this unforgiving spirit so defiles the man, that he cannot possibly breathe the pure

atmosphere of prayer, and this hateful temper, here again, breaks the connection, cuts the man off from all touch with the God of Love.

Wilful sin, selfishness, an unforgiving temper, this is the vicious Trinity that hinders prayer and separates us from God. Need this vile Trinity remain in our hearts, when, if we will but follow the indwelling Spirit's leading, we can enthrone there instead "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost," the Divine Trinity? Then, indeed, shall we truly pray that effectual kind of prayer "which is the means by which our soul thirsting after God obtains all the graces which rain down upon us from the Divine Fountain of Goodness and Love<sup>d</sup>."

"We kneel, and all around us seems to lower ;  
 We rise, and all, the distant and the near,  
 Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear ;  
 We kneel—how weak ! We rise—how full of power !  
 Why therefore should we do ourselves this wrong,  
 Or others,—that we are not always strong,  
 That we are ever overborne with care,  
 That we should ever weak or thoughtless be,  
 Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,  
 And joy, and strength, and courage are with Thee ? "

*Trench.*

<sup>d</sup> Scupoli.

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"The Rev. J. R. Cohu gives a very instructive, earnest and readable account of Biblical criticism. His book has in view the reader ignorant of, or perhaps repelled by modern Biblical scholarship, and its tactful and sympathetic tone should make it useful."—*Journal of Theological Studies*.

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